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Frontispiece.

INFLUENCE;

OR,

The Evil Genius.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A TRAP TO CATCH A SUNBEAM."

[*Mrs^M Mackarness*]

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN GILBERT.

LONDON:

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & CO.

FARRINGTON STREET.

1853.

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1899.

LONDON:
R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.

INFLUENCE.

CHAPTER I.

"Our cradle is the starting-place,
In life we run the onward race,
And reach the goal.
When in the mansions of the blest,
Death leaves to its eternal rest
The weary soul.

"Did we but use it as we ought,
This world would school each wand'ring thought
To its high state.
Faith wings the soul beyond the sky,
Up to that better world on high,
For which we wait."—*Longfellow.*

"OH! Master Cyril, now you really are a bad boy! my nice clean little saucepan you've been and put all that nasty filth in; and look at your jacket, what will your Ma say?"

"Hush—nonsense—what a fuss about nothing! your saucepan will clean—my jacket will brush—so don't make such a noise: don't touch it, I'm going to pour it away directly."

B

"Why, good gracious! it's glue—I shall never get it out. I won't stop in the place, I declare, to be worried so: you're for ever at mischief."

"Pooh! nonsense, woman, it's only gum; it will all come clean—do *not* make such a noise; you're the most ill-tempered cook I ever saw."

"None of your impudence, sir, 'cause I won't stand that,—give me the saucepan directly." But no! Master Cyril held it tightly, and a sharp struggle ensued, and the young gentleman's temper was fast rising, when a fresh arrival in the kitchen induced cook to resign her hold of the saucepan, and turn for redress to the new comer. She was an elderly person, of a meek and gentle demeanour, dressed in a brown stuff gown, and white handkerchief crossed over her bosom, and fastened by a small old-fashioned brooch, containing some very fair hair. Her cap and apron were also of most scrupulous whiteness, and some Holland cuffs reaching nearly to her elbows covered her sleeves.

"I'm glad you've come, nurse," exclaimed the infuriated cook, "I'm glad you've come; perhaps you'll be good enough to take your young gentleman out of my kitchen; and if ever he comes into it again I walks out of it for good, that's all."

"Oh! dear," said nurse, in the gentlest tone, strangely

contrasting with the noisy vulgar voice of the other servant, "oh! dear, Master Cyril, what is the matter?"

"Matter! nothing, you dear old thing; but a horrid piece of work cook's making, because I've melted some glue in here; now it won't hurt it, will it, dear?"

"Well, I think not if it's cleaned immediately, cook;" answered nurse in her accustomed, quiet, and particularly encouraging voice; "but you must have a saucepan of your own, my dear, and not take cook's,—it certainly is very inconvenient for you not to have one of your own; we must see about it when we go out. But a little hot water poured on the glue in a cup would have been the best way to melt it, my dear; but how could he know, poor lamb?" she continued, laying her wrinkled hand on his fair curly hair, and looking fondly in his face.

"Now, my dear, suppose you go up in my room, and when I've cleaned the saucepan I'll come to you: I've something to show you—*that* I have."

"Oh! have you—show me now; where is it? in your pocket?" and he began hastily to cram both his hands in the old dame's capacious pocket.

"No, no, my dear," she said, gently disengaging herself from his violent grasp; "in my room; you go and I'll soon come—do, dear," she said, more earnestly, as cook, who had been all this time mutter-

ing to herself about "spoilt children," seemed inclined to burst out again.

"Well, don't you be long then, or I shall rummage out all your drawers and boxes; because it will be so horridly dull up stairs, and I shall be dying to find what you've got to show me." And he sauntered out of the kitchen, after pulling a very smart cap of cook's off the dresser, and putting it on the cat who was sitting near the door.

Mrs. Haward, the mother of our hero, was a widow; had been, a beauty. She had married a wealthy merchant for his money—an uneducated man by far the inferior of the well-bred, well-born beauty in all respects save two: he had a warm and generous heart, and sincere and unaffected piety—she, alas! neither. He died when his boy was too young to remember him, leaving his widow with three children, two girls older than Cyril, who could just recollect that they had had a father, but that he was very vulgar, and a tradesman, and mamma did not like to have him mentioned. Honoria, the eldest, was a beauty, as lovely as her mother had been before her; but Julia and Cyril, alas for them! bore the lineaments of their father, and although their faces were intelligent, and they inherited their mother's brilliant complexion, they were far from handsome. As a matter of

course with such a mother, Honoria—the beautiful Honoria, was the idol, and Mrs. Haward trusted that a coronet would one day rest on that noble brow, crushing with its weight all recollection that the father of the youthful peeress had been a merchant. Her whole time and attention, therefore, was directed to the education of this daughter, and Julia and Cyril were permitted to “scramble up” as they best could.

By a fortunate chance Mrs. Haward had, at the birth of her eldest child, secured the services of an inestimable woman as nurse, and so useful a person was she in every way, that even now, when there were no babies to take care of, nurse remained a member of Mrs. Haward’s establishment, and the devoted though humble friend and companion of her two neglected children.

“Dear old nurse,” as they called her, was no Solomon, but she knew right from wrong, and with a holy reverence for the former, pitied and feared the latter, and of an evening—when she had carefully dressed Honoria, and taken the poor child down to the drawing-room to have her young ears poisoned by the foolish adulation of her mother’s visitors—she would return to the nursery, and with Cyril on her lap, and Julia on a stool at her feet, tell them pretty fairy legends or country stories, all bearing the true

and simple maxim, that to be good was to be happy. On Julia, her quiet teaching had a most beneficial effect; she had thought and intelligence beyond her years, and her disposition was as gentle as her gentle nurse's: but Cyril—poor nurse! she adored Cyril, and though she did not mean it, she spoilt him.

The boy had a noble and affectionate heart, and a good disposition, but a wilful and impetuous temper. Impatient of correction, Cyril was only good when no one found fault with him; and as nurse could only bear to see smiles on the face she loved so dearly, no contention was ever heard in the nursery: and the gentle little Julia learned the admirable discipline of self-control and self-denial, and would quietly give up the toy with which she was playing, and amuse herself with another, or patiently wait until he had done with it, if it was her brother's pleasure to take it from her. But in justice to nurse, it must be said that whenever this occurred, she was rewarded, and rewarded in the way she liked the best, by being told that she was very good, and that the angels smiled on her each time she thus yielded so sweetly to her brother: for nurse's law was the law of kindness; she never threatened of what would be done if they were naughty, but how they would be loved if they were good.

When Cyril was thirteen years old, it suddenly struck Mrs. Haward that he ought to go to a boarding-school, instead of the small daily one he attended; and hearing there was a very good one some few miles off, she settled that he should be sent there.

The day he was to go was a sad day for nurse, and blinded with her tears, she could scarcely see to pack his things; but she knew he ought to go, and did all she could to conceal her emotion from the boy. He liked the idea of it; "he was glad to get away from so many petticoats," he said, "and be with companions of his own age and sex;" but when it really came to going,—when he sat on his trunk an hour before his mother was ready to take him, and looked round his comfortable room, and into nurse's kind and sorrowful face, the poor boy's heart was full, and he was very silent.

Suddenly the sound of wheels was heard in the avenue: he must go,—he must make an effort,—be a man, not a child; so he sprung from his seat, kissed his little sister, and then, turning to nurse,—dear nurse,—his speech, meant to be very cheerful, of —"We shall be very jolly when I come home for the holidays," ended in an uncontrollable fit of tears; but they were soon checked by the presence of his mother, for to a proud nature like Cyril's, there is

no check so sure as want of sympathy; and quickly relaxing his hold of nurse's hand, he ran out of the room, down stairs, and into the carriage, merely calling out as it drove away, "Good-bye all."

The drive was not a long one, and they soon arrived at a large old-fashioned house, with a board extending along the whole front, between the drawing-room and bed-room windows, on which was inscribed the information that it was an Academy for young gentlemen.

Over the quaint-looking old porch grew a large magnolia, and shading the windows to the left was a splendid cypress—the side of the house, which could be seen from the road over a low garden-wall, was covered by a vine, the rich bunches of the purple fruit hanging in tempting clusters.

The loud summons of the bell was answered by an old man-servant, who conducted them across the polished oaken hall, threw open a ponderous door, and admitted them into a long room also of polished oak, hung with pictures; four large windows, with dark-coloured velvet curtains and deep window-seats, looked out on a beautifully mown lawn ornamented by a stone fountain, its basement thickly surrounded by scarlet verbena; a brick wall covered with fruit compassed the garden, and beyond the broad gravel

walk, which skirted the lawn, was a smaller garden laid out in the Dutch fashion.

It was a splendid autumn day, and the sun was streaming brightly into the room which would otherwise have appeared somewhat sombre to Cyril's youthful imagination; for though the walls were covered with pictures, they represented grim-looking men and severe-looking ladies in powdered wigs, save one, a large painting of still-life over the carved oaken beaufet—fruit and dead game. The furniture was all of polished oak, black with age; over the very high mantel-shelf was hung the antlers of a stag. A log of wood was smouldering on the dogs in the fireplace, before which was spread a large bearskin to serve as a rug.

The master, Dr. Huddlestone, a little old man, wearing an old-fashioned dress quite in accordance with the house, soon made his appearance; and after a short conversation, Mrs. Haward, saying she had promised to hurry home to make some calls with her daughter, took her leave. It was not his dear nurse—*only* his mother—almost a stranger to him, so Cyril manfully said "Good-bye," and for the first time in his life was alone amongst strange people, in a strange house. But he soon made friends; his ingenuous good-natured disposition made him a

universal favourite; and ere the holidays commenced, he had cemented one or two of those school friendships which endure through a lifetime, when formed at a boys' school; for men's friendships are of much longer duration, much firmer and more true, than those between women. It is seldom, unhappily, that a woman's best friend is found amongst her own sex; a thousand petty jealousies and foolish gossip continually disturb, and finally uproot, their friendship; while the more engrossing nature of men's occupations, and their general preponderance of head over heart, renders such silly misunderstandings impossible.

Nurse had ventured to suggest that Miss Julia ought either to have a governess or go to school, as she was getting beyond her tuition, and she also was so dull without Cyril. Honoria's governess had been dismissed for about a year—she had masters now,—and besides, she was a first-rate person, too expensive for Julia; so a lady was sought whose terms were more moderate, and Julia was soon daily pursuing a course of study with a quiet well-informed lady, whom she soon learned to love and respect.

Poor nurse! these were sad days for her. Julia was too amiable, too grateful to forget or neglect her, and she paid a visit daily to the now deserted

nursery; but it was "not as of yore." Nurse thought her young lady was getting too clever for her, and that her boy, her idolized boy, was lost to her too: he had new interests, new occupations, and she could never expect him to love or make a companion of her as he used to do. But she never murmured, she knew it was for their ultimate good, she knew she had done rightly by them, and tried to console herself by thinking so. And then she would get the broken neglected toys from the closet, where they were kept, and arrange them on the ground before her; trying to cheat away the dreary present and make believe it was the past—and think that she should hear the little pattering feet about the room, and the shriek of joyous laughter when that donkey moved his head and ears. But no! the donkey nodded now in vain,—the little old man stood motionless on the ground, for he had no one to encourage him to drive his pigs to market,—the miller looked disconsolate at the *fall in flour*, for there were no little chubby hands to lift the sacks into the wagon again; and the large doll kept her eyes fast shut, for what was the use of opening them, when there was no little happy face to look the brighter if she did? So poor nurse gazed upon all these vestiges of the old times, till two large tears

rolled down her cheeks ; and calling herself a stupid old fool, she would put them all away again, and go down to the kitchen for a chat.

Anxiously did she count the hours till the delightful 28th, when her boy would be home for the Michaelmas holidays for a few days at least. And charmed, indeed, was she when he bounded from the carriage ; and with the same delight, the same affection as ever, flung his arms about her, and kissed her again and again. It was during these holidays that the battle of the saucepan was fought which I recounted some pages back, and from which I have, I fear, too long digressed.

CHAPTER II.

" But once I gazed, then on my way I went,
And thou art still before me ;
That one short look has stamp'd thee in my heart,
Of my intensest self a living part."

Mrs. Butler's Poems.

NURSE soon followed her charge into the room she occupied, where she found him listlessly gazing out of the window.

" Oh ! that's right ; I was just getting sick of waiting ; now, then, what have you got to show me ?"

"Well, now you shall see, my dear, such a pretty thing," and diving to the bottom of her pocket, nurse pulled out a bunch of keys, and unlocking a trunk, took from thence a morocco case and handed it to the boy.

He opened it eagerly, and made an exclamation of delight as it revealed a beautifully painted miniature of a little girl about five years of age.

Cyril had a great admiration for the beautiful, for Mrs. Haward had endeavoured, from their earliest infancy, to encourage a taste for beauty in nature and art in her children's minds. She had taken pains that everything around and about them should be in the best possible taste. The house stood in the most picturesque part of Kent, and was surrounded by grounds admirably laid out. The rooms were beautifully furnished; pictures by the best masters, ancient and modern, exquisite statuettes, fine china, prints, rare plants, and exotics saluted the children at every turn. Their toys were the best that could be made, and they had no books that were not illustrated by the best artists. Thus, living as it were in an atmosphere of beauty, the children's tastes were formed in a good school, and, young as they were, they could distinguish perfectly between what was deserving of admiration and what was not.

So Cyril was delighted with this exquisite picture. He looked at it in every light ; he covered the lower part of the face and gazed into the depths of the earnest blue eyes, then shaded them with his hand and looked at the delicate mouth and round dimpled chin—held it close to him, held it at arm's length, and finally inundated nurse with questions as to " who it was? who painted it? where she got it? was it hers to keep? and a hundred others, fast as he could utter them.

Upon what slight threads do our destinies often hang. The promise to show Cyril something had been an ingenious invention of nurse's to get him from the kitchen ; and all the way up stairs she had been puzzling what to show him : for it was one of her wise and undeviating rules never to promise the children anything, however simple, either of punishment or reward, which she did not perform. At length this miniature struck her, and she thus showed Cyril—his fate.

" Do tell me where you got it?" he repeated impatiently.

" Why, my child, it ain't mine, it's Miss Julia's, at least, it's your Ma's. Miss Julia brought it up to show me, 'cause it's the picture of a little girl, an orphan, my dear, who is left to your Ma's care ; and

she's coming to live here, I believe ; but she's older than that now—that was painted about four or five years ago."

"Coming to live here,—this picture,—this little girl. Oh, how jolly ! Where is Julia ? I must know all about it." And he was racing off, still holding fast the miniature, when nurse stopped him and begged him not to take it with him, for fear in his hurry he might fall down and break the glass.

"Fall down, rubbish ! one would think I was a baby. Oh ! here's Julia ; that's right," he exclaimed, as the door opened and his quiet sister walked in. "Oh, tell me, Ju, the name of this darling little thing ; and why she's coming to live here ; and all about it !"

"That is the very thing I wanted, dear ; mamma sent me for it, and to tell you our dinner is ready."

"Well, then, make haste, tell me who it is."

"Oh ! she is the orphan daughter of a friend of papa's, left to mamma's care, and she is to come and live with us, and be educated with me."

"When, when is she coming, and how old is she ?"

"She's coming at Christmas, I think, and is about nine years old. But do wash your hands, and brush your jacket, Cyril dear, for dinner is quite ready : there's the bell ; oh ! do make haste."

But Cyril still stood gazing at the picture; and holding out his arm to nurse, said, "Here, brush it, dear." *i*

• "Yes, my dear; but you must wash your hands. Give the picture to Miss Julia, and wash them, there's a dear."

"Oh, bother. But what's her name, Julia?" he continued, as he reluctantly gave the miniature up, and began washing his hands.

"Ethel Ashworth. There's the bell again; do come, dear."

Slowly and thoughtfully Cyril followed his sister down to dinner. The moment it was over he asked her to come out in the garden with him,—he wanted to talk to her. But Julia would not; she said she was going back to Miss Bartlett's, to be taught some new work, until three o'clock, and then they were going for a walk.—Yes, Julia was improving in every knowledge, but one of the most important,—the knowledge which a mother's example could best have taught her, to know and perform her mission here,—the proper exercise of woman's paramount influence over man. There would be fewer wretched marriages, fewer dissipated, degraded men, if this lesson were included in a woman's education—if they were taught to feel the angel duty which

. . .

devolves on them, to keep the wandering steps of those who are tempted so much more than they, in the paths of virtue and of peace,—to make them feel that in the busy world is noise and confusion—that at home there is order and repose,—that there “eyes look brighter” when they come,—that the smile of welcome is ever ready to receive them, the work, the books, are ever ready to be laid aside to minister to their pleasure: they would find amusement then at home, nor strive to seek it elsewhere. And not alone to the higher classes of society should this be taught: it should be a lesson instilled into the minds of all—high and low, rich and poor. Fewer heart-broken wives, weeping and scolding, would stand waiting at the doors of public-houses, to lead the unsteady steps of their drunken husbands home, if that home offered a room as cheerful, a fire as bright, a welcome as ready as the tap-room they frequent. Duty has seldom so strong a hold on men as women; they cannot, they will not, for duty’s sake, remain in a dull, tedious, or ill-managed, quarrelsome home, but leave it to seek elsewhere the comfort and amusement which fails them there: and when riot and revelry have done their work, the wives and sisters, who have done so little to make them otherwise, are pitied for their bad husbands and brothers.

Julia was so amiable, that had she been told it was good for Cyril to devote some of her time to him, she would have done so willingly; but she never was, and so the poor boy was obliged to do without a companion, or be content with old nurse. Mrs. Haward was too much taken up with Honoria to attend to him; and Honoria with—herself. Julia having refused to go out with him, he strolled listlessly into the garden by himself; but finding little amusement in that, went up stairs again to nurse, and snatching from her the stocking she was darning, he threw himself on the ground, and laying his curly head in her lap, said—

“Tell me something to amuse me; it’s so dull. I shall be glad when the holidays are over. I wish I’d got a pony to ride, then I shouldn’t care: ’most all the boys at school can ride. Oh, I say, wouldn’t it be capital to ride all over the fields without saddle or bridle; and wouldn’t you be frightened, old girl, eh?”

“Yes, my dear, that I should.”

“Well, but that would be very foolish of you, because there’d be no danger; I’d stick on—never fear. I should like to see myself falling off. Oh! it would be so jolly, wouldn’t it?”

“Yes, my dear, that it would.”

“ And I should like a target in the orchard, and a dear little brace of pistols, to learn firing at a mark. There’s a boy at our school says he can do it beautifully. We’ve got a leaping-bar there, and they say I’m one of the best leapers. Oh! we do have such fun at school—all manner of games; hop-scotch is great fun. I wish you weren’t old, I’d teach you. Oh! fancy you playing at hop-scotch!”

And as the idea the more he thought of it appeared the more ridiculous, the boy rolled on the floor in fits of laughter. Nurse always made a point of laughing whenever he did, and so for some moments they continued their mirth; and then, suddenly ceasing his laughter, he said, “ How old am I, nurse?”

“ Thirteen, my dear, come the sixteenth of next month.”

“ Oh! thirteen: nine and how many make thirteen?—four. Ah! I’m four years older than Ethel Ashworth. How old do men marry, nurse?”

“ Marry? my boy! Oh, when they’re eight or nine and twenty, or thirty.”

“ Nonsense! that’s much too old: nineteen or twenty is the proper age, I think. I shall marry Ethel Ashworth, and I won’t have any one else.”

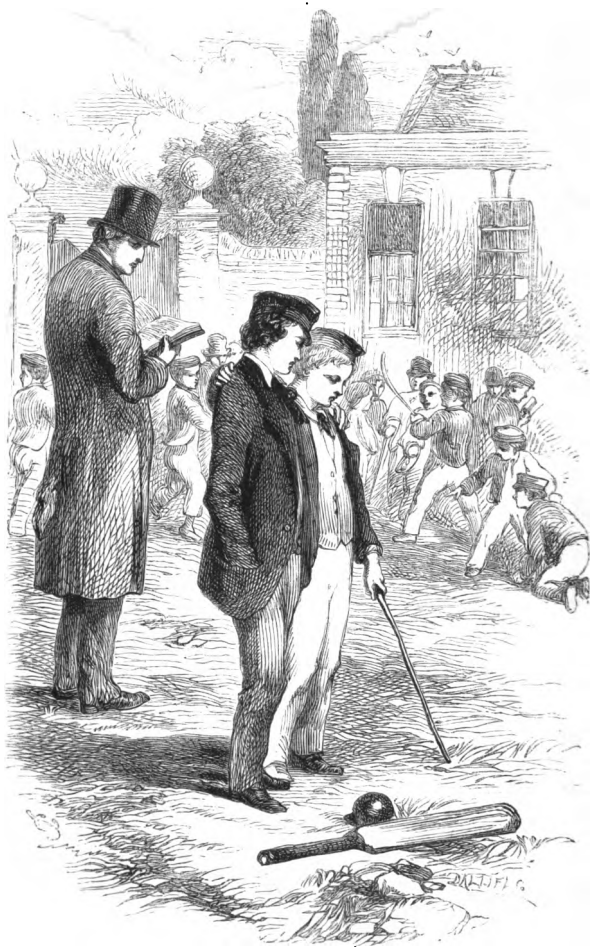
"So you shall, my dear," answered the complaisant nurse. She never contradicted him, and was so in the habit of playing with the children at "pretend we do this or that," that no suggestion of Cyril's was considered by her in any other light than an amusement. During the remainder of the holidays, therefore, this was the constant theme of conversation; till at length Ethel was styled in the nursery, Cyril's "little wife." The week ended at last, and with undisguised pleasure Cyril returned to school.

It is a bright, exhilarating autumn day, and Dr. Huddleston's boys are thoroughly enjoying it in the large playground: some four or five are at leap-frog; others at cricket; some of the quieter, smaller boys at marbles, or feeding their rabbits; some bounding over the leaping-bar;—all enjoying the fresh, breezy day, and the strong health which God has blessed them with. Here and there might two boys be seen, their arms thrown over each other's shoulder, eagerly imparting some new scheme of fun or mischief, or a weighty secret, which has worried them all school-time, they have been so very anxious to tell it to their favourite friend.

Cyril is thus engaged: his companion is a very handsome lad, taller and a year or two older than

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himself. He is talking: Cyril listening with great attention.

"I dare say," spoke the boy, in a singularly sweet and musical voice—"I dare say, you will think me an odd fellow; but you are superior to the boys here, and are more likely to understand me, that is why I have chosen you for a friend. The moment I saw you, I felt I should like you; and I'm glad, very glad, we are friends: we will keep so, Haward. I'm only sorry we are in such a school: we were both meant for better things. You should have gone to Eton or Harrow: so should I; but my father gave way to my mother's foolish ideas about boys being hurt and knocked about at public schools, and so I was sent to this place. Such humbug! as though it was not the making of boys to knock them about. The idea of a fellow of spirit coming to such an old woman's school as this! Look at that Graham—there's a muff to put over boys! why he's only fit to teach writing in a girls' school."

"He's very kind, Forrester," interposed Cyril.

"Kind! stuff!—what do boys want with kindness? I'd rather they broke one's heart than tried to break one's spirit, as they do here. But I tell you what, this is my last quarter, thank goodness: I'm to have a tutor at home—bad enough, but better

than this ; and you must come and spend the holidays with me, will you ?”

Cyril hesitated : Ethel was to come next holidays, but he did not like to make that an excuse ; he was silent.

“ Should you not like it ? ” asked his friend, seeing his hesitation.

“ Oh ! yes, very much ; but I should like you to come and stay with me first.”

“ Well, as you like ; but you must spend one vacation with me.”

The loud sounding bell proclaimed that the hour of recreation was over, and from all parts of the playground the boys hurried in.

“ We meet again in the afternoon, unless you are going to the match ;—the boys are going out into the Nine Fields, you know.”

“ Oh ! so they are, I forgot,” said Cyril. “ I think I half promised—”

“ Well, never mind, I shall not go ; but do as you like, of course ; ” and with an indolent air the handsome lad moved off.

“ I’ll stay with you, Forrester,” Cyril called after him, but he did not appear to hear, and he was about to follow him, when a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice pronounced his name. He

looked up, and the dark grey eyes of the man whom Forrester had been stigmatizing were gazing into his.

“A word with you, my boy,” said the usher in his usual kind voice. “I have seen you for the last week or two neglecting all your old companions; all the healthful amusements suited to your age, for the society of one with whom I grieve to see you so intimate; and I now speak to you, not as a master, but as a friend, to beg you will as quickly as possible break this most dangerous intimacy, or you will remember this warning, and be sorry you neglected it when it may be too late. There is scarcely another boy in the school to whom I should think it necessary to give this advice; but you, with your peculiar disposition, are the very person to be worked on by such a boy as Forrester. You must not quarrel with him; but you need not make him your friend, your intimate. Act upon what I tell you at once, or, as I said, too late you will repent it; for once the purity of the young heart sullied, once its notions of right and wrong perverted, the mischief may never be eradicated. Think of what I have said, my boy, and let me have the pleasure of seeing you profit by it:” and leaving Cyril mute with astonishment, the usher walked away. He was a kind, gentle creature, tall and thin, with a pale

sallow face, occasionally brightened by a very sweet smile. He was no favourite—when was an usher at a school ever a favourite?—he was laughed at by the elder boys for his romantic disposition, and ridiculed by all for his strange manners and appearance.

Cyril was now fairly puzzled, and he lost his place in the class considering which could be right, and what he should do ; and, through the din of the school, the buzz of many voices, all saying different lessons, he heard alternately the low tones of the usher repeating his impressive words of warning, and the melodious voice of his friend imparting new and delightful ideas from a mind so superior to his own. He saw the pale cadaverous face of Graham, with his strange dark eyes ; and the beautiful animated face of his friend glowing with enthusiasm as he recounted some deed of daring, or scheme for the future. He contrasted the words “ You are so superior to the boys here,” with “ You, with your peculiar disposition,” and preferred the former ; in short, the usher was in the minority. He manfully determined nothing and no one should tear him from his friend, and went down to the last but one in his class.

School ended ; the boys scrambling over forms, and upsetting every impediment, rushed out to get

their wickets and bats, and hurry to the place appointed for the match. Problems, Latin exercises, sums, and classics, all were forgotten in this far more engrossing pursuit ; but Cyril, looking anxiously amongst the boys, singled out and joined Forrester.

CHAPTER III.

" An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes
Were loadstars of delight which drew me home
When I might wander forth ; nor did I prize
Aught human thing beneath heaven's mighty dome
Beyond this child." *Shelley.*

A SHARP frost is hanging its icy jewels on shrub and tree, tracing beautiful patterns on the window-panes, and crystallizing the withered leaves lying in the walks ; and the pale winter sun is busily employed in destroying all its labour, and turning to water all the delicate tracery on which it appears to have expended so much trouble—as Time destroys the work of men's hands, and smiles above the ruin. A small brook runs through a meadow which adjoins the grounds of Mrs. Haward's house ; its murmurs are now stilled by the frost, who has it fast in his icy fetters. A

narrow plank with a hand-rail crosses it, and a path leads from it to the church, the spire of which can now be plainly seen through the leafless trees.

Two lads were skating on that little streamlet, and on the plank stood a little girl, watching them; and as the taller, by some awkward slide, lost his footing, and fell, she clapped her little hands and laughed loudly.

The boy rose, and raising a pair of magnificent dark eyes to the pretty laughing face looking down on him, said, somewhat pettishly, "Thank you, Ethel; I might have been very much hurt."

"But you weren't, you know," said the little maiden, laughing again; "and you looked so funny, I could not help laughing. But I wouldn't if you had been hurt, would I, Cyril?" she asked of the other boy, who skated towards them.

"No, that you wouldn't; you're the kindest little darling I ever saw."

"There now, Mister Forrester!"

"Oh, yes; Cyril is sure to take your part," answered the other boy, "and quite right, too: ladies are never wrong. I commend his gallantry, but I think we are both rather deficient in politeness, keeping you standing in the cold, while we amuse ourselves. Come, Haward, let us walk now; she'll

take cold. Help me off with my skates, and I'll return the compliment."

The boys divested themselves of these incumbrances, and, taking each a hand of their sweet little companion, proceeded towards home.

It was a very pretty sight to see this little fairy-like creature the constant care of two rough boys: they would go nowhere without her, and she was their first consideration.

Ethel was indeed a charming addition to the household, and by none so welcomed as by nurse. Again she had a companion in the nursery—again it rang with childish laughter—again she found a ready and delighted auditor of her simple stories—and again she saw an innocent face asleep in the little bed in her room, and nurse was happy. Cyril, who had obtained his mother's consent to bring his friend home for the holidays, defying Graham's warning, who had given him a mingled look of sorrow and reproach, as the carriage drove away; was not in the least disappointed in the new comer. She was quite as pretty as his dreams had pictured her, and he still honoured her with the intention of making her his wife; but he never called her so now, for some indefinable feeling he was unable to account for.

They came at a quick pace, lifting the little

delicate creature over every rough and uneven place, for fear she should hurt those tiny feet; stopping every now and then to draw the boa closer round her throat; and when she complained of cold fingers, Forrester drew off his worsted gloves, and covered the miniature hands with them. Fond as Cyril was of her, it was to Forrester she was always indebted for such little attentions: he seemed ever on the watch to anticipate her slightest wish, and was constantly doing something for her comfort which never occurred to Cyril, though he was equally anxious to please her. But it was for Cyril the little girl was always employed—for Cyril those tiny fingers were for ever busy, mending his gloves, arranging his books, feeding his pets, putting fresh flowers in his room, which in the coldest weather she trotted out to gather, the Christmas roses being plentiful in the garden—a winning, coquettish smile was Forrester's reward for his numerous attentions; but it was round Cyril's neck her little arms were constantly twined, and her kisses showered on his face.

Julia smilingly remonstrated with her one day for never kissing Forrester, but she only answered, "He's such a big boy," and ran away after Cyril.

When the young trio reached home, they went as usual to the boudoir, but ere they opened the door

a loud voice arrested their attention, and Cyril, stopping his companion, said—

“Stay, mamma’s angry.” As he spoke, the door opened quickly, and Julia hurried out, looking pale and frightened.

“Don’t come in,” she said, “don’t come in: go in the school-room; there’s a famous fire there, and Miss Bartlett’s out; go.”

“What’s the matter?” whispered Cyril.

“Never mind, dear, never mind,” she said; and she hurried them towards the school-room door, as the voice grew louder and louder.

Could that angry tone be addressed by a mother to her child? Alas! yes. In a low chair by the fire sat Honoria, her beautiful lips compressed tightly together, and her pencilled eyebrows slightly knit; but otherwise the lovely face was calm and cold as a statue. No emotion was visible, save by the quick and irritable movement of one of her small feet. Standing before her was her mother, pale with passion, one hand on the table, on which was laid pens, ink, and paper.

“Do you hear me, madam?” she ejaculated loudly.

“It is impossible to help hearing you, madam, you speak so very loudly,” answered Honoria.

“Will you do, then, as I bid you?”

"I will think about it, as I told you before."

"Honorina, you will drive me mad. Think you the man will submit to be treated thus? Days have already elapsed, and you persist in your refusal to reply to him: you have had time enough to think."

"Four days are strangely in the minority with a lifetime."

"Nonsense, child—lifetime, what do you mean?"

"When people marry it is supposed they will pass their lives together, is it not? unless they prefer the scandal of a separation; that is what I mean."

"I thank you for your explanation, I am obliged by your condescending to explain anything you mean; but hear me once for all, Honorina; this moment you write that answer, or I will not live to see the ruin your refusal will bring upon us. Do you *hear* me?" again she almost screamed, as her daughter sat gazing quietly into the fire, and giving no sign of any impression being made on her.

Her mother pushed the table close to her, and violently grasping her arm, pointed to the writing materials: passion choked her utterance,—still Honorina sat there swinging her foot backwards and forwards, never moving—never attempting to loosen her mother's painfully tight hold of her wrist. Both

were silent for a second; then Mrs. Haward, in a voice ground, as it were, through her teeth, said—

“Is it for this I’ve beggared myself, rested neither night nor day, slaved for you, neglected my other children, thought of you, and you only? and now, ungrateful girl, when every farthing is gone, when I know not from day to day how long a roof may shelter us, you refuse to save the mother who has sacrificed her all for you.”

A slight distention of the nostril and curl of the upper lip, was all the effect this speech seemed to make upon its hearer; at its conclusion the speaker loosened her hold of Honoria’s hand, and sunk as if exhausted into a chair: there was another moment’s pause, and then Honoria, rising from her indolent position, and standing with her tall and majestic form erect before her mother, said in distinct and measured accents:—

“You are my mother, madam, and I suppose your daughter should obey your commands; the man to whom you would *sell* me is not an objectionable person; I do not hate him, and rather than bear the disgrace of bailiffs, executions, &c. which your extravagance, you tell me, will bring upon us, I will consent to this barter: but you must write the note yourself, and pray make the man under-

stand that your daughter considers herself cheaply bought;" and without waiting for an answer from her mother, she moved slowly out of the room.

When the children entered the school-room they found nurse there making up the fire. Ethel ran to her and put up her face to kiss her.

"So cold out, nurse."

"Yes, my dear," answered nurse; but it was not at the little bright face gazing into her's nurse was looking; her eyes were fixed upon Cyril, who had walked to the window with his friend, who was talking earnestly to him.

"Will you take off my things, please, nurse?" the child asked.

"Yes, my dear," again she answered; but as she felt for the bonnet strings, she was still looking at her boy.

I have said that in the companionship of Ethel nurse was happy. Yes, happy in comparison with what she had been, and happier much some weeks back than now. Then she had thought incessantly of the anticipated pleasure of her boy's return, and talked unceasingly to her new charge of how he loved her and how she loved him, and how happy they would all be when he came home. They had counted the days, the minutes, and long ere he

reached home they were out in the high road watching for him. The moment he caught sight of them he sprang from the carriage and flung his arms about his nurse's neck. It was well she took her fill of kisses then, for it was her last opportunity.

From that day a mere passing salutation was all Cyril accorded her. At first she tried to think it forgetfulness; but that was too poor an excuse for her common sense long to entertain. She saw it was intentional, and watched with longing eyes for some return of his old affection, but in vain: yet in that anxious watchfulness, unrepaid by a faint glimmer of what she hoped for, nurse saw, or thought she saw, the influence which was at work—the origin of this cruel change. Each night she made a resolution to leave a scene which was making her so wretched, but each morning determined to give him one more trial. Had she overheard a conversation the day of Cyril's return, her suspicions would have been too truly verified.

"My dear fellow," uttered a dangerously insinuating voice, "it is ridiculous, you must leave it off."

"But, Forrester, she has been more than a mother to me."

"Well, your mother paid her to take her place. She has been paid regularly, I presume: what more

can she want? Be civil to her, of course; but for heaven's sake leave off kissing her, it is so absurd. Fancy if the boys had seen you, you'd have had no peace again. However, your secret's safe with me; but for pity's sake don't let me see you do such a thing any more. Kiss that lovely child as often as you like, but pray spare the old woman. A passing condescending 'good morning, or good night,' is all that is necessary."

The lesson conveyed so cleverly in ridicule, sunk deep in the sensitive mind of him to whom it was given, and the condescending "good morning" *was* all that was granted to that loving, yearning heart.

She would fain give him a fair trial—patiently bear the torture, that she might not judge him harshly; but she had determined to-day should be the last day. She was no use now; she was only staying because she loved them; they were all too old to need a nurse: and if this one last trial proved that he cared no more for her, she would bear it no longer; and so, mastering the choking sensation in her throat, and collecting Ethel's things together, with her eyes still fixed on Cyril, she said—

"You have scarcely said a word to me this two or three days, my dear Master Cyril." No answer.

The boys continued talking. Ethel glanced at nurse, and then, running to Cyril, patted his arm.

"Well, dear?"

"Nurse spoke to you, Cyril."

"Cyril and I are very much interested in our talk; what did you say, Ethel?"

"Why, nurse spoke to Cyril, and he did not answer her; and that is rude, and I can't bear my Cyril to be rude."

Cyril's face flushed to his temples. He turned quickly round—

"Where is she? what did she say?"

Nurse was gone.

They remained until tea-time in the school-room, and then one of the housemaids came to tell them tea was ready.

"Why do you come, Jane? where is nurse?" asked Ethel.

"Oh! don't you know, Miss, nurse is a-going? She's packing up her things now, and she's a-going to-night."

"Going!" ejaculated Ethel and Cyril, in one voice.

"Yes; and she's as cross as ever she can be: for I asked her, as civil as I could, whatever she was going all in such a hurry for, and she never so much as give me an answer; and when——"

"I think we had better go to tea, had we not?" interrupted Forrester.

"Yes, sir; it is quite ready," said the girl, making way for them to pass.

"Where is nurse? in her room?" asked Ethel.

"Yes, Miss."

"Then I shall go to her. Poor nurse; I *am* so sorry;" and as fast as her little feet could carry her, Ethel hurried away. Forrester walked quietly along the passage to the boudoir, in which the tea was prepared, followed slowly and thoughtfully by Cyril, who had uttered no sound but that one word "going," since this astounding intelligence.

When they entered the room, he seated himself mechanically in a chair, and still was silent, though Forrester kept up a running conversation on every topic, save the one which, spite of all his efforts, was so deeply painful to Cyril. After a pause, Forrester said—

"Shall we wait for Ethel, or shall I pour out the tea?"

Cyril sprung to his feet—

"Forrester, Ethel is gone where I should go,—she is gone to ask nurse what makes her leave us; to comfort her if she needs it; to show her she cares for her, and is sorry that—that she is going away.

She's an example to me: and I tell you what; you may go and tell the boys what you like,—tell them I'm a milk-sop, and I'll show the first that says so he's mistaken; tell them what you please, but I *will* go to her, and ask her to forgive me, to—to stay with me if she will: but I'm too late I'm afraid."

The boy had been dashing away with the back of his hand the large tears which gathered in his eyes, and with an effort had kept back the sobs which rose in his throat, almost preventing his hurried and exerted utterance; but at length it mastered him, and laying his head on the table, the silence was only broken by his passionate weeping. Undisturbed, he for a few moments gave vent to his excitement, and then a low satirical laugh broke on his ear: he raised his head, he was alone; he looked round the room, the door was open,—Forrester was gone; he ran out into the passage, and met Ethel.

"Cyril, dear," said the child, taking his hand in her little soft one, and leading him back into the room, "I want you to come with me to nurse. I'm glad that boy's not here, because now I've got you all to my *own* self, and I can tell you just what I please,—what comes into my head; and I'm always afraid of him, he's so clever, and sneers at one so. Now, Cyril, my own pretty Cyril," she continued,

throwing her arm round his neck, and putting her sweet face close to his, "you've been a naughty boy to nurse, and you know you have, because I can see you've been crying."

Cyril bit his lip. The idea of a girl knowing he had cried; how could he be so silly: and again that laugh seemed to ring in his ears.

"You need not be ashamed of crying, dear," continued the sweet childish voice, "because I love you for it, for I know that you are sorry, and that you did not mean to be a naughty boy, and you will come with me to nurse and say so. I'm not clever, like Master Forrester, because I'm only a little girl; but Miss Bartlett says it is better to do what is right than what is clever only; and it is right to beg pardon when we have affronted any one, or hurt their feelings; and we ought not, Cyril, dear, to say our prayers, Miss Bartlett says, if we've made the tears come in any one's eyes, till we've done all we can to wipe them away again. So you will come with me, won't you? Do, dear," she said, still more earnestly.

"I'll come, I'll come; go and say I'll come; there's a dear little thing. Kiss me first."

"That I will, my good Cyril. Oh! I'm so pleased. Then dear nurse will stay with us perhaps, and we

shall all be happy again ;” and away she flew again to nurse.

Cyril sat thoughtfully where she had left him for a few moments, and then rose to follow her. As he went towards the door, Forrester entered.

“Where are you off to? Going to *kiss* nurse, eh?”

“No,—no,” said Cyril, as the tell-tale blood mounted to his temples.

“Oh! go, pray, if you are going; but I think you may as well beg my pardon as well as your nurse’s.”

“Your pardon, Forrester! I’ve done nothing to you.”

“Nothing!—You call it nothing to taunt me with being a tale-bearer: I who, ever since you have been at school, even before we were friends, did all I could to prevent the boys knowing a thousand things about you which would have made you the laughing-stock of the school.”

“I was hurt and angry, Forrester. I did not know hardly what I said. I am so sorry; forgive me. I know I have much to thank you for, and that you advise me for my good.”

“Try and think so always, though people would tell you otherwise.”

“I *do* believe it. I know and feel that you are

a thousand times cleverer than I am. I have been quite a fool to-day ; but she has been so good to me."

"Oh ! yes, don't let me keep you from her ; and when you have persuaded her to stay, you must come and wish me good-bye ; for your sister tells me it is jealousy of me which makes her wish to leave, therefore you must choose between us. I went down stairs to find out the truth, for I did not wish to be unjust ; but it struck me this was the reason. It is nothing that you have done,—how could it be ? you have done nothing wrong,—but simply jealousy of your affection for me ; every friend you have will be the same, of course : however, do as you like, decide between us. I shall see you this next quarter at school, and then we must part, I suppose ; for if she stays there is an end to our friendship. Your sister says she made quite a scene down stairs, and your mother was quite willing she should go at once, sooner than have such a tragedy about nothing. However, go to her now and pacify her, you will find another friend, I hope, dear Cyril, to love you as well, who will not be equally disliked by your nurse."

Oh ! Cyril, quickly decide ; close your ears to that seductive voice, let the calls of duty and gra-

titude drown its destructive melody. No, it is too powerful for his resistance. The moments fly by unheeded, the shades of evening close over that little room, and the boys are still there talking earnestly over the red glow of a blazing comfortable fire; and at the great gates of the carriage-drive, in that cold, cheerless winter evening, stands an old woman with a trunk at her feet, and a boy with a band-box, standing by her; he is looking up the road, she has her eyes fixed on the windows of a room in which the light of a fire reveals two figures standing before it. At another window, a young, sweet face is gazing out at her, but she sees it not—sees nothing but the room where the fire is, and that but dimly through the tears which fill her eyes. At length the sound of coach-wheels disturbs her.

It stops before the gate: one more long earnest look, and in another moment she is seated in the coach—her luggage is stowed away upon the top—the boy is gone—the great gates are closed—the young, sweet face has disappeared from the window, and all is as still as though no weary, aching heart had left that great house for ever.

The door of the school-room, some few seconds after, opened very quietly, and a childish voice said—

“Cyril, you have broken your promise; I am so

sorry,—good night, I am going to bed now ;” and before either of the boys could move, the door closed again, and Ethel sorrowfully took her way to her own room.

Years after, many a time as vividly as though that moment uttered, did those simple, childish words come back to him :—

“Cyril, you have broken your promise ; I am so sorry.”

CHAPTER IV.

“The worst of all mockeries is a marriage without love ; a yoking together, but not an union ; bondage, without a bond.”—*Man and his Motives.*

At the outskirts of a little village on the Surrey side of Kent, stood a picturesque cottage—picturesque from its age and ruined condition ; the timbers were blackened with age, its heavy chimneys covered with ivy, and its low roof dotted here and there with moss and houseleek.

Two small windows on either side the door, looking into the neatly-kept garden, gave a notion of internal comfort and order, from the clean muslin curtains in them and the flourishing plants. Against

the door hung a thrush in a wicker cage, and on the very white step a cat was sunning herself in the warm rays, with her legs "stowed away" under her in the strangest manner, looking like those ingenious pussies made of shells, which rejoice the hearts of children as remembrances from Ramsgate and Margate. An Isle of Skye dog was looking from underneath his shaggy eyebrows very wickedly at pussy, giving occasionally a short, sharp bark, evidently meaning it as an invitation to play; but pussy was not to be tempted. Beneath a large mulberry-tree, growing near the house, was a dog-kennel, from which a liver-coloured spaniel kept running in and out to the extent of its chain, uttering various little whines, expressive of its wish for liberty and fraternity with the happy terrier, who knew not the miseries of a chain.

The interior of the cottage was as comfortable as its exterior promised, though equally quaint and old-fashioned. The large chimney admitted a couple of seats on each side of it, and a large iron hook supported a cauldron over the blazing wood fire, amongst the embers of which some fine large potatoes were roasting. From the huge rafters hung hocks of bacon and strings of herbs and onions. In the centre of the room stood a table, covered with a

coarse but very clean cloth, and in the centre of the table a large wooden bowl to receive the potatoes.

The neatly-sanded floor, the bright covers and candlesticks over the chimney-piece, the gay flowers in the windows, and the savoury smell from the aforesaid cauldron, joined to the exquisite cleanliness and neatness of all around, gave it the appearance of a true English country home, with all its cheerfulness and peace.

A very pretty young woman was superintending the cooking, looking perhaps prettier than she really was from the jauntiness of her dress. A thick muslin cap, of the species called "mob," covered her shining light hair, which was closely and neatly braided; her dark-blue and white cotton gown she had pinned up round her, exhibiting beneath a brown stuff petticoat, which was very short, and displayed her grey stockings and leather shoes; her sleeves were rolled up above her elbows, and her neck was covered by a checked rose-coloured and white handkerchief, knotted in the front, with the two ends pinned under her arms. By the open window, which admitted the soft balmy breezes of spring, sat an old woman, with "spectacles on nose," knitting stockings, but her industry was at present stopped, and her work lay in her lap, while her pale-grey eyes were earnestly fixed

on a woman who sat opposite to her, and who was eagerly relating something evidently very interesting to the old dame.

"Then they sold up the old place, my dear?" she said, in the tremulous voice of age.

"Yes, aunt, they did; but I'll begin at the beginning. Soon after you left, you know, and just after they hired me to wait on Miss Ashworth, Miss 'Noria was married. Well, such a to-do I never see. He was a fine-looking gentleman; but you'd have thought she was going to be hung instead of married, she looked so miserable—not crying, but silent and stern-like—never smiled nor spoke, never wished none of us good-bye, nor nothing. Well, all was soon quiet again after the wedding, but they all seemed altered. Master Cyril—"

The old woman dropped her head and sighed heavily.

"—went back again to school, and next holidays, 'stead of coming home, he spent them with Master Forrester." Again the old woman sighed heavily.

"Well for him he did," continued the narrator, "for then came all the trouble; strange-looking men were always a-coming and talking to Missis, and left her a-crying; and at last we was all called up one day, and she told us as they were a-going away to live

in London ; and discharged us all, giving us our month's wages to go directly. Well, after that, you know, I went to live at Squire Masterton's, and for five or six years I heard nothing about 'em : when, one day, as I was coming up Holcott Lane, by the back gate of the old place, a lady, as I thought I'd seen somewheres, comes up to me, looking dreadful ill, and says, pointing to the gate—

“ ‘The Hall is let, is it not ?’

“ ‘Yes, Ma'am,' says I, ‘it is.’

“ ‘Could I get in to see it, do you think ?’ she asked. I told her I thought not, as it had been let some time, and the people was there.

“ Well, to make short of my story, who should it be but Miss 'Noria. She burst out a-crying when she found who I was, and then told me such a tale as was enough to make your heart ache : such a husband as she'd got. They'd been in foreign parts ever so long, and when they come home he wouldn't so much as let her find out where her mother and sisters was, nor write to them, nor nothing. You wouldn't believe, aunt, nor no one wouldn't, how that brute of a man had used her. She knew nothing of her family, and I could tell her nothing ; and so, poor thing, away she went, for her husband was at the inn, but she'd come round to see the old place

afore he was up. He'd come down electioneering. Oh! if ever a poor creature's spirit was broken hers was; though she fired up in her old way, and did call him a power of hard names; but she was dreadful afraid of him too, I could see.

"Well, aunt, soon as I got home a gentleman came to our front gate, and asked to see master,—and if it wasn't he! I knew him as soon as I set my eyes on him, and I declare I could hardly keep a civil tongue in my head. He was with master ever so long, and when he was gone I found he'd been a canvassing, as they call it; and then I just told my story. Bless you, Master wouldn't believe a word of it,—said he know'd what kind of a wife the poor man had, though he said nothing against her, but only looked sad and sorry when her name was mentioned. Well, I couldn't stand that, and I just did talk, and I said, says I, 'I tell 'e what it is, sir, I lived with Miss 'Noria afore she was married, and I won't stop in the house if you gives your vote to that 'ere deceiving man, that I won't. It ain't no business of mine, I dare say;' but says I, 'I'm a deal more inclined to shut the door in his face than open it to him; and so, if you votes for him, I'd rather go, if you please.' Oh, bless you, I did, I wasn't afraid.—Poor Miss 'Noria!—and it ended in

my going too ; but I soon got another place, with an old lady who said she was quite pleased with what I'd done, there now. I should have wrote it all to you, only I can't write, you see ; so I thought as soon as ever I got a holiday I'd just drop down and see you, and tell you all about it ; but law ! time do go so fast, it's a'most three year since then."

With deep and silent interest the old woman listened to the tale. At its conclusion she said—
" And you know nothing more of Master Cyril ? "

" No, aunt, nothing. "

" Did he never speak of me after I was gone, my dear ? "

" I never heard him. He was always with that young gentleman. But Miss Ashworth, she used to talk about you often, dear little creetur. "

" Dinner, mother dear, " said the young woman we have before mentioned, who, during the recital, had been busily employed in getting the meal ready ; and helping the now somewhat infirm old nurse out of her chair, she seated herself at the table, offering another chair to their guest, and the trio began their dinner, the young ones talking joyously and merrily together, but their poor old companion silent and thoughtful. Yes ; eight long years had passed since last poor nurse Fenton's eyes had been gladdened by

the sight of the boy she had so loved. The long space of time had wrapped in oblivion every shade of anger at his cruel neglect—had eradicated every feeling but the most devoted love for the child who had so won his way into her heart.

A serious illness had been the result of her over-excitement, through which she had been most tenderly nursed by her son's wife, in whose house she had taken up her abode. He was gamekeeper to a gentleman near, and a good salary enabled him and his pretty little wife to afford a comfortable shelter for the declining days of their mother; but she was too independent to be any expense to them, and refused to come unless they would permit her to pay a small weekly sum, which the savings of her long years of service enabled her to do. At first, the sight of their little merry children had been painful to her; but, with the freshness of her sorrow, that wore away, and at length they amused her. The children soon, with their instinctive appreciation of goodness, learned to love her dearly, and choose her for a companion; for her simple, untutored mind was on a level with their capacity, only differing from that of the children, inasmuch as care and experience had destroyed, in some measure, that hope and trust which so beautifully characterises childhood. It could

not entirely eradicate them ; for they are ever the tenants of a mind so unsophisticated as hers. They stand in the place of knowledge. The learned, those who have studied nature, who can dissect each tiny flower, who have watched the heavens, and told how high they are in comparison of earth, who can account for the roar of the thunder and blaze of the vivid lightning, have felt that but one Mighty hand could frame such wonders—and trembled and adored ; but the unlearned, the simple-hearted, such as nurse, only see that the sky is bright, that the flowers bloom, that the storm rages ; and believing in Him who made it all, trust to Him who can work such miracles for to-day, and hope in Him for to-morrow.

Often since she had left Mrs. Haward's had she longed to go over and see them, though a distance of some fifteen or twenty miles divided them ; but she dreaded to find no friendly welcome ; dreaded, again, to see no responsive look of love on the face of that idolized boy : and having taught herself resignation, endeavoured to convince herself it was in the natural course of things, and what was to be expected as he grew older, she thought it better not again to rouse the painful feelings she had succeeded in quieting.

This information was the first, therefore, she had

received of the family since, and that contained but little news of him; but her niece promised her that she would seek for information respecting him, and have it immediately conveyed to her.

We must anticipate her, and change the scene from the comfortable refuge of poor nurse, to the small house in London, now inhabited by Mrs. Haward:

CHAPTER V.

“ Warm is the gush of young affection; sweet
The overflowing of affianced hearts,
Each unto each with holy rapture pour'd.”

Montgomery.

VERY different to the elegantly furnished, beautiful house is the dwelling in which we now find the Hawards; but still, rooms inhabited by a lady will always give evidence that they are so: and at a small expense, directed by the most perfect taste, there was a certain air of elegance and superiority even here.

An arm-chair, a pretty escritoir, a gilt stand for flowers, and a few ornaments had been saved from the wreck; and these, with Julia's small cabinet-

piano, some of her charming drawings adorning the walls, and a bookcase containing some handsomely bound books, combined in making the room better fitted to their taste than its first stiff lodging-house appearance gave promise.

Lying in the aforesaid arm-chair on the same bright spring day, the balmy breezes of which nurse had been inhaling at the open window, was Mrs. Haward, with a young girl seated near her busily employed on some very unromantic-looking plain-work; stretched on a sofa, with a book in his hand, lay a young man; his eyes were not on the book, but fixed very earnestly on the face of the young girl, whom we will pause to describe, as the appearance of Ethel Ashworth at the age of eighteen, may not be uninteresting to the reader.

As far as beauty was concerned, Ethel had not carried out the promise of her childhood; the blue eyes had grown darker and were more grey now, though still graced with their long lashes: a high white forehead, long glossy brown hair, and as sweet a smile as ever won a heart, were her only claims to beauty; but an indescribable fascination in her manner, and a continued change of expression in her face, made those who knew her, fancy her lovely: and the earnest gaze with which Mr. Cyril Haward

was now regarding her, would lead an observer to believe he was among the number who had an exalted idea of Ethel's beauty.

"What are you going to do with yourself, Cyril, to-day?" asked his mother.

"Heaven knows! my dear mother; for I'm sure I don't."

"I think, sir, you might employ your time better than by reading a French novel."

"I was employing my time worse at that moment, perhaps; by raising hopes, and building castles in the air, which may fall and destroy me in their ruins."

"Then you have fixed on a profession at last, dear Cyril," said Ethel smilingly, looking up from her work.

"An architect! Could I be an architect of my own fortune, building it on the plan I have sketched in my heart, Ethel, I should indeed be a happy man."

Ethel made no reply to this, but working very rapidly, pricked her finger, broke her gathering thread, and lost her needle; all which confusion was very pettishly rebuked by Mrs. Haward, who still more pettishly said to her son—

"I think it is high time you did something, sir,

and not allow your poor sister to keep the whole family, and you in your disgraceful idleness."

The blood rushed to Cyril's face, and he was about to make an angry reply, when Ethel sprang from her seat, and laying her hand on his arm, said—

"Don't move, Cyril dear, I see my needle." And as she stooped down as though to pick it up, she whispered—

"Gently, gently, she is worried to-day." An earnest pressure of that little hand was her only reply.

"How rude you are, Ethel, always interrupting—you make a point of doing so when I am speaking."

"Forgive me, dear Mrs. Haward, it was rude."

"And you, sir," she continued, turning to her son, "do not condescend to answer me; because I suppose you have no defence to make. Nothing can excuse your idleness; it is all very well for Mr. Forrester, with money at his command, he can afford to saunter about town and amuse himself; but since you have chosen to turn yourself out of the situation my friends secured you, I think it is somewhat shameless to be idling as you do; I wonder you have not more pride than to permit your sister to keep you; that would be a more worthy exhibition of it than the folly which leads you to think yourself above being a banker's clerk."

Cyril, who had been biting his lip to restrain the angry words, and master his temper, could keep it in check no longer; and answered in the low and measured tones in which he always spoke when very angry:—

“Mother, you know that that is not true; I am not too proud to do anything that is respectable, and you know also that a quarrel with one of the clerks was the reason of my leaving, and not the folly you accuse me of. Would to heaven I had something to do; anything to get away from this confounded place, and the everlasting annoyance I have to endure,” he added, rising and pacing the room, and talking louder as he grew more excited. “Amusing myself, indeed! many fellows would never be at home if they were worried as I am, and for ever taunted, and reminded of the one theme most painful to me.”

“Don’t pace the room, and don’t talk so loud,” interrupted his mother; “nothing you can say will induce me to alter my opinion of right and wrong, so you had better save yourself the trouble of talking.”

“Thank you; then you are to say what you please, however unjust, and I am not to reply, not to defend myself, not to ——”

Mrs. Haward rose from her seat, and with the

most irritating smile on her face, quietly walked out of the room.

"Now, Ethel," said Cyril, when his mother had closed the door, "is it not too provoking, too much for any one's patience?"

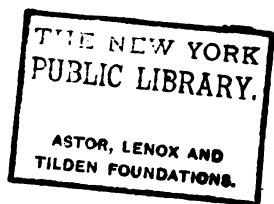
Ethel looked up with her soft eyes and answered gently—

"Yes, dear, very provoking; but she is your mother, Cyril."

"Is that a fair excuse, Ethel? we ought to receive greater gentleness, greater consideration from one's mother, surely; more especially when we have a neglected childhood too, to thank for any defect in our own tempers."

"But, my dear Cyril, remember it is very unwise, when we wish to prove ourselves right, to put ourselves wrong; and when you use disrespectful language to your mother, you are wrong in every sense of the word. You can always leave the room as Mrs. Haward has done, when you feel your temper getting the better of you: one triumph over our own perverse tempers is a prouder conquest than many a battle: don't you see?" she asked, smiling sweetly at him.

"I see you, my guardian angel," he answered. "What should I do without you, Ethel?" he con-





tinued, kneeling down beside her and removing the work from her hands ; “ look at me—don’t work—and listen to me. When you first came here as a tiny child, do you remember that, slighting all the attentions of a certain handsome friend of mine, you gave all your affection to his ugly companion, waited on him, anticipated his every wish, watched for his coming, and wept at his absence,—don’t turn away your head ; look at me,—wept at his absence, and when he came home again, would fly to him with outstretched arms, and lay your sweet face and sunny curls against his cheek, and tell him how glad you were to see him back, because, Ethel, you loved him ? Will you say so to him now, or has time, amongst its other devastations, numbered your love for Cyril, and so bereft him of his sole ambition to make Ethel Ashworth his wife ? ”

Tremblingly, breathlessly, Ethel had drunk in those tones, those words of passion, from him to whom alone she would have listened. True to her childish love, no other image had filled her young heart ; and though doubts of his affection for her had at times disturbed her, still she loved on, and hoped on ; and now, to know she had not loved in vain,—to hear him say his sole ambition was to call her his ; kneeling before her, supplicating

her to love him as she used,—not knowing how much more she loved him. It was too much happiness!

What cared Ethel that she was only eighteen, and he but twenty-two; that she had no fortune, he no position, no means of keeping a wife? Think you such thoughts entered the head or heart of the young, loving, enthusiastic girl? But one thought was in her mind,—one thought, in its ecstasy and intensity overpowering all besides,—she loved and was beloved again; and as he repeated, in low and fervent accents, “Will you say so to him now, Ethel?” she bent her head down, and as the colour covered her face and throat, she pressed her lips upon his forehead, and murmured “Yes.”

It is needless to detail all he said in answer to this confession. His rapture at hearing from the girl he had so long loved, that his affection was returned, may be more easily imagined than described; and unheeded flew the moments, as, with his arm round her, and her head upon his shoulder, they sat together in that silent happiness which has in it more of heaven than of earth. Years may roll on, bringing calm and tranquil gladness, or deep and agonizing sorrow, but nothing blots from the memory the bewildering joy of such a moment. The foot-

steps of Time may have trodden down all the romantic hopes which seemed laden with brilliant blossoms for futurity, and stern experience have taught that "hopes are but the falling stars of the heart, which, having once left the heaven of our imagination, are dashed to pieces when they come in contact with the realities of earth," but still with every recurring recollection of that moment when we were assured of the possession of the only love we coveted, comes back the thrill of joy and the forgotten tenderness, like a strain of some lovely melody we "have not heard for long."

Wrapped in these new and delicious sensations,—elevated from earth, from the world and its sordid views, by their pure and disinterested love, the young couple sat for some time, when a loud knock at the hall-door startled Ethel, and she sprung from Cyril's gentle hold.

"It's only Julia, dearest," he said, "don't go away ;"—but a heavier step than Julia's ascended the stairs, and the door opening, admitted Forrester. Ethel muttered a hurried "how do you do?" and escaped out of the room as quickly as she could, leaving Cyril, almost as much confused as herself, to the tender mercies of Mr. Forrester.

Mrs. Haward has informed my readers that Julia

was laudably engaged in making use of her talents for the benefit of herself and family—for the mother who had impoverished herself and her other children, to carry out her ambitious views for Honoria,—Honoria, who never, from the day she married, had noticed or appeared to remember her. Little did Mrs. Haward think the fate her ambition had brought on her wretched child, or bitter indeed would have been her remorse.

According to the promise he had given her, Mr. Heathfield relieved Mrs. Haward from the immediate pressure of debts, on his marriage with Honoria ; but far more was she involved than she had calculated on, and he had left England directly, giving her no clue by which to find him, and had thus crushed her hopes of aggrandizement and reinstatement in her position.

Nothing, therefore, remained for them but to sell the house and furniture, and seek small apartments in London, and obtain a situation for Julia, who, though only fifteen, was perfectly competent to the tuition of young children. Ethel was no burden to them : on the contrary ; for a small income left her by her parents defrayed the expenses of her board and education.

Forrester and his family were unbounded in their

offers of service and assistance, thus attaching to them still more the warm-hearted Cyril.

Nothing would satisfy Mr. Forrester but that Cyril should be removed from Dr. Huddlestons, and finish his education with the tutor he had engaged for Gerard ; and with unfeigned sorrow did Graham see Cyril depart with young Forrester, to take up his abode under his roof, and be always exposed to his Influence : at parting he said, " Haward, my boy, notwithstanding your neglect of my advice, your excellent qualities have endeared you to me ; and amongst the many who in this school will regret your absence, none will do so more sincerely than I. If my fears are unfortunately confirmed, and you do fall a victim to the contagion of bad example, and so be led into trouble and require assistance, do not forget me, and if it be in my power to aid you, command me ; through Dr. Huddlestons you can always hear of me."

Heedless of his advice, only wondering at his strong prejudice, Cyril departed with his friend ; whether he learned the truth of his words the sequel will show.

He remained some years with the Forresters, and then obtained a situation at a bankers, from whence a violent quarrel caused his dismissal ; for his

impetuous temper, over which he had never been taught to exercise control, increased with his age ; what he imagined an affront roused in an instant the too ready indignation, and hasty words were spoken before he paused to reflect whether the offence had been intentional—whether his anger was just. Julia was now governess to Forrester's two sisters. The family were at present in town for the London season; and it is at their house we shall find Julia: She is seated at her embroidery frame, in a handsome library, as comfortable as good taste and a good fortune could make it.

Her pupils are not with her, for their mother had requested permission to take them out for some purchases ; but Julia is not alone, with one arm leaning on the embroidery frame stands Forrester, talking to her in low and earnest accents.

Womanhood had not added any charms to Julia's personal appearance. She was still "poor little plain Julia," as her mother called her. But an expression of such great pleasure is now illuminating her tranquil features, and a heightened colour brightening her eyes so much, that Julia really looks charming.

"And so, Julia," said Forrester, while a smile played over his beautifully formed mouth, "so

you really were a little jealous about that little girl?"

"Not jealous, Gerard."

"But something very like it, Julia, foolish girl; remember for the future that I never act without a purpose, but that that purpose is seldom the one which is apparent; it is therefore necessary that the girl I love should trust me, trust me implicitly, Julia, or she will be for ever a prey to jealous suspicions: believe me when I tell you I love you, and do not, however appearances may be against me, fancy I can love another. Do you understand me, and will you do as I ask you?"

"I will try, dear Gerard," she gently answered.

"Then to return to our first subject of conversation, which we have interrupted by this foolish discussion respecting the extent, or rather signification of my attachment to Ethel Ashworth, brought about, I believe, by my expressing a wish that to her, above all others, you will not reveal our attachment."

"Certainly not, if you do not wish it; but," continued Julia, as a shade of sorrow for a moment dulled the brightness of her face, "is it right to keep it from my mother and from your mother, Gerard? still more; consider the dependent position I hold in

your family : you who have so nobly forgotten that I am only a poor governess, deem that others will be as generous ; but I cannot hope it, and indeed, dearest, I shall feel so wretched to think I am acting a dishonourable part towards your parents, who have been so kind to me ; and I cannot combat conscience, which tells me I ought to sacrifice what I hold so dear, your love, at the shrine of duty and of honour."

"Pshaw!" muttered Forrester, impatiently ; "it does so provoke me when you talk in that way. How poor must your opinion be of me, if you can fancy I would encourage you in anything wrong! Again I return to the burden of my song: trust me—obey me, and you will not repent it; at least if you love me, that is."

Julia looked up at him reproachfully ; and then, throwing his arm round her, and pressing a kiss on her burning cheek, he continued, much more gently, "No, no, my Julia! Gerard loves you too well—is too proud of you, to run the risk of having your actions censured. Only trust me, my own darling ; it is all I ask."

Ah, Julia! what is there you would not do—would not believe, when uttered by that sweet-toned voice? How could she doubt when those fine

eyes, beaming with expression, were gazing into hers?

“There come the girls, dearest; I hear the carriage. Good-bye for the present; I shall see you again, for I am going to your house.”

In another moment he was gone, and soon Julia was striving to give her attention to Goldsmith's History of Greece, monotonously read out by Maude Forrester, and rectifying the crooked lines in Lizzy, the elder sister's, drawing.

When her mind had not thus been agitated, she quite enjoyed this employment; for, besides the affection she felt for them as Forrester's sisters, they really were very charming girls.

Maude was very lovely—Lizzy handsome, and like her brother; but Maude was the more generally admired. The joyous expression in her sweet face was so attractive,—the deep blue eyes dancing with merriment and mischief,—the long fair hair, like floss silk, floating about her face, combined with the purest and most delicate complexion, inspired admiration even in the most critical observer.

It was very difficult to teach Maude, though; she had not the slightest inclination to learn anything, and would rather far have been washing her dog, or rolling on the floor with her married sister's fat baby,

than reading history or geography, which she could not recollect, or slaving at her music or drawing, which to her seemed so dull and so useless; but the moment Julia attempted a word of rebuke at her idleness, Maude's arms were about her neck, and her mouth stopped with kisses. Lizzy gave no trouble at all, but pursued her studies with unvarying diligence and perseverance; she treated Julia with respect and gentle attention, but seemed to know her no better than the first day they had met.

"Now we've done," said Maude, springing from her seat an hour after their return. "There is only one thing which makes me deplore the conclusion of these fatiguing mornings, and that is your departure, my best Miss Haward. Positively, if any one but you taught us, I should expire. The three afternoons on which those dreadful masters come is too horrid to think of. I wonder I don't tire their patience out—I know I try: poor Giotti looks so despairing at me sometimes."

"Naughty girl," said Julia; "I don't quite believe you, though. You are not the dunce you wish to make yourself."

"I don't want to be a dunce; I should be sorry not to know how to read, because I like reading very much. Besides, I don't remember that that gave me

any trouble, and it affords me a great deal of pleasure."

"So would all learning, dear, if you would only apply yourself. Every fresh acquirement is like a ray of light in darkness; and the rich store you will lay up, if you work now, for hours of sickness or old age, you cannot fancy. While you are young, and well, and happy, you are in a degree independent of such resources; but in age and sickness they are invaluable. You have not much time left to work; you know you are to come out in a few months, and to leave my tutelage."

"*Please* don't talk about that, and I will indeed be very industrious—indefatigable. Lizzy, why do you not put by that unhappy old man, who looks as if he had suffered on the railroad, and got some one else's limbs instead of his own?—one of my reasons for objecting to that mode of travelling, as any exchange for this would not be an improvement, would it, dear Miss Haward?" and, lifting up her dress, she coquettishly displayed a beautiful little foot and ankle.

"Certainly not, love," said Julia, smiling.

"Oh, Maude," exclaimed Lizzy, rising from her drawing, "why do you let Miss Haward put her own shawl on? Allow me, Miss Haward."

"I beg you ten thousand pardons," said Maude; "do you know I think I have an obliquity of vision, for I never see what I ought; don't you think I have?" and with her bright saucy eyes she gazed up in Julia's face.

"Kiss me," she continued, as Julia laughingly patted her cheek. "I'm a great plague; don't you hate me?"

"Oh, very much indeed," answered Julia. "Now let me go, like a dear girl—it is getting late;" and affectionately kissing her pupils, Julia hurried away.

CHAPTER VI.

— "Accuse thy folly, not thy fate,
She may redeem thee still, nor yet too late."

Byron.

On the evening of that day so eventful to Ethel, on which she seemed to have commenced a new existence, she was seated in the recess of a bay-window, with Cyril beside her, while Julia was playing some waltzes. Mrs. Haward was half asleep in an arm-chair, and Forrester reading, or pretending to do so, at a table at some little distance; so Cyril and Ethel were talking very earnestly, thinking every one too

much engaged with themselves and their pursuits to notice or listen to them.

"Forrester thinks, my Ethel, that we had better not say anything to my mother of our mutual affection."

"Why not, dear Cyril," answered Ethel, raising her candid, ingenuous face to his—"is there anything to be ashamed of?"

"No, no, my darling," eagerly replied Cyril, "but he thinks it would be useless, till I have means to marry, saying anything about it. What can we say more than she knows, for I am sure she has long guessed the state of my heart; but when I am thinking of marrying, then, of course, I shall tell her."

"Well, I do not see the distinction, and I sincerely wish you did not, for indeed I cannot consent to it. I could not bear the hourly, daily annoyances I should have to encounter from acting a dishonourable part. For you," she continued, seeing a shade of vexation pass over his face, and reading his thoughts, as she always could—"for you I could endure sorrow, pain, suffering, or any ill that was not caused by wrong-doing, but I should be unworthy of the love you bear me, if I committed an act which either you or I might live to blush for. Let us tell your mother the truth:

her disapprobation, should she express any, cannot alter our feelings towards each other; but we shall be free from the charge of having deceived her."

"Right, right, my good Ethel, as you always are. We will tell her."

Perhaps it would scarcely be fair to say how very fondly and gratefully Ethel looked at him.

"Why is it," he asked, "that your simple reasoning always convinces me, against, too, such very clever arguing?"

Ethel smiled, began a sentence, and stopped.

"What did you stop for, darling—what were you going to say?" said Cyril, fondling the small hand which was resting in his.

"Nothing of any consequence,—something I had better not have said, so I followed Miss Bartlett's good advice, and put it back again. Dear Miss Bartlett, how fond I was of her!"

"Why you are such a loving little thing, you are fond of every one,—always excepting my unfortunate friend, who, I believe, comes under the bane of your ladyship's displeasure."

"Quite true, dear Cyril, there is an indescribable something I cannot get over; and he does not like me either, I feel sure."

"It may be so: but that either should dislike the

other, is to me marvellous. He is so fascinating and so handsome; and you, my Ethel—I am sure no one can dislike you.”

“ You are partial, dear. Mr. Forrester and I never were very good friends, as children. I always seemed to distrust his excessive attention: and, in short, I do *not* like him.”

“ What charming waltzes, Miss Haward!” said Forrester, rising, and approaching the piano.

“ Very charming,” said Mrs. Haward, yawning; “ but I’m tired to death, so come and assist me up stairs, Julia—I shall go to bed.”

“ Let me come,” said Ethel.

“ No, my dear, thank you, Julia will come. Good night to you all,” and taking her daughter’s arm she left the room.

“ Haward! have you forgotten you promised to see Kenneth to-night?”

“ By Jove, I had almost,” said Cyril, jumping up. “ I must go, I shall not be long, Ethel, dear. Will you come, Forrester?”

“ No, thank you, I’m lazy: but I’ll wait here until you come back, if you’ll make haste, for I half promised to play a rubber with my father to-night, and I don’t like to disappoint him.”

“ Oh! I shall not be gone more than a quarter of

an hour. You'd better come; you can have a cigar as we go."

"No; I've done smoking for to-day. Go, and be quick back."

Cyril did go: but there was a feeling of annoyance at leaving Ethel alone with Forrester, which he could not account for. Was he jealous? No; he would not allow such a thing. "It is only because I know Ethel does not like him," he thought, "that I object to leave them;" and so he hurried as much as he possibly could to get back again.

Ethel took up some work,—a purse she was making for Cyril,—and drew her chair to the table to be near the light. Forrester was again turning over the leaves of a book. As she drew nearer, he looked up, and gazing at her for a moment, sighed heavily. Ethel did not notice it—scarcely heard it. She was thinking of Cyril. There was a long silence. At length Forrester said—

"How pretty that purse is, Miss Ashworth! For Cyril, I presume?"

"Yes," answered Ethel, blushing slightly, "it is."

"Do you remember promising to make me one?"

"Yes, I do; but I found Julia was making you one, so I concluded you did not want two."

Forrester made no answer, but sighed again. Presently he rose from his chair, and after walking to the fire-place and leaning his arm on the mantel-piece as if in deep thought, he came close to where Ethel was seated, and said in his low and peculiarly touching voice—

“ Miss Ashworth—Ethel—may I claim the privilege of our long acquaintance, and speak to you as—as a brother ?”

“ What a grand preface !” said Ethel, laughing, “ certainly you may speak to me in any way—that is civil. Are you going to lecture me ?” she continued, raising her eyes to his face ; but she dropped them as suddenly, for there was an expression in them she had never noticed before. She pushed her chair a little back, and earnestly began to wish Cyril would come back, or Julia would come down.

“ Nothing but our many years’ friendship could, perhaps, excuse my mentioning the subject of your—of Cyril’s unspeakable happiness,” he continued, “ of which he has this morning told me. And he has doubtless told you the advice I gave him. You, with your noble, ingenuous mind, will wonder why I should counsel a course of apparent dissimulation ; but, Ethel, it was feeling that your happiness was at stake which induced me to offer advice so contrary

to your notions of right. I felt you would be averse to this, and would probably use your superior influence to deter Cyril from following my suggestion, and that he would naturally yield to your opinion; it is therefore why I have seized this opportunity of urging you to listen to me, to abide by my advice. You cannot doubt my affection for Cyril. My feelings towards yourself," he added, in a much lower tone, "are *now* not to be named. I have only to assure you that your happiness—your mutual happiness, is my aim. Cyril is very young—too young to bind a girl by any promise, unless she is well prepared to take the consequences. I see a great deal of Cyril, and I know him well; but some years of trial and experience are needed before he can be worthy of the happiness he covets. I, therefore, endeavoured to persuade him to wait until he could obtain a certain income, before he mentioned the matter to Mrs. Haward or any one, that you, Ethel, might not be distressed by breaking an engagement which had been made public, should you see the necessity of doing so. Ethel, dear Ethel, forgive me for this liberty, and think of what I have said."

He had uttered all this in a low and impressive voice, with his fine eyes fixed earnestly on the

changing face of his astonished listener. When he ceased speaking, she raised her head and looked at him so steadily that the man of eight-and-twenty flinched before the honest eyes of the young girl; and she then said, in a very calm and distinct voice—

“ I am infinitely obliged to you, Mr. Forrester, for your gratuitous kindness, and regret I am unable to reward it in the best way, by following your advice; but I have made my decision, and will abide by it, and am perfectly prepared to take the consequences; and I am also determined to inform Mrs. Haward of a circumstance so intimately connected with her, and which I should indeed consider it dishonourable to conceal; and I also sincerely hope that Cyril will, as you say, naturally yield to my opinion.”

A dark glance overshadowed Forrester's face as Ethel spoke these words,—an expression which seldom marred the serene beauty of his countenance, usually calm, still, and grand; but now the darkness had gathered over it a coming storm, and it seemed an effort to him to resume his conversation in those low and soft tones in which he usually spoke; but, as he was about to make some reply, he was interrupted by the entrance of Julia and Cyril, who had made the best of his way home.

With the most surprising velocity Forrester seemed to overcome his previous constraint; and turning with his usual gracious manner to the new comers, he handed a chair to Julia, and said to Cyril, "Well, what good fortune awaits you; any?"

Cyril glanced at Ethel's flushed face, and answered, hurriedly—

"No, no; of course not; I never expect any." And he flung himself on a sofa, still looking uneasily at Ethel.

As usual, she seemed to see what he thought; and when Forrester turned to speak to Julia she sat down beside him and said, in a low voice—

"We have been having quite a warm argument;—I will tell you about it to-morrow." And then rising so as not to excite Forrester's suspicions, she went to the piano. But he had noticed the hurried whisper, and coming to the instrument, he began turning over the leaves of the music, and then said, softly—

"It is scarcely necessary to ask you not to repeat our conversation to Cyril, as you must see it might tend to the rupture of a long and tried friendship."

In the same tone Ethel replied—"I am no mischief-maker, Mr. Forrester; but, to ensure the

continuance of that friendship, I should recommend you to abstain from any reference to the subject of our conversation, either to Cyril or myself."

A bitter smile crossed his face for a second ; and then, placing on the music-stand "The Last Links are Broken," he requested her to sing it with Julia. They did so ; and at its conclusion he rose to take his leave, asking Cyril to walk a little way with him ; but which a sign from Ethel decided him in refusing. When he was gone, Cyril drew his chair to Ethel, and begged her to tell him the subject of her argument with Forrester.

"Now, how curious you are ; can't you wait until to-morrow ?" she said, laughing.

"Why, it must have been something unusually exciting, for your dear little pale face was quite crimson."

"Well, then, it was on the subject of keeping our engagement secret from Mrs. Haward ; but I was the victor ; and you will tell her to-morrow, dear ; will you not ? And now I am going to bed."

Cyril's face had quite cleared up as Ethel spoke, and looked at him with a glance of honest affection.

"Darling, I will tell my mother the first thing in the morning. I am sure Forrester could not help being convinced by you."

It was long before Ethel could sleep that night, for her thoughts were busy wondering at Forrester's speech, trying to fathom its purpose, and thinking whether she was justified in concealing it from Cyril. At length, she decided that the wiser course was not to allude to it more than she had done ; for, knowing Cyril's impetuosity, she calculated it might break up their friendship, and possibly throw Julia out of a situation. She slept, therefore, at last, determining as much as possible to exert a contrary Influence to Forrester's, over the yielding disposition of the man she loved ; praying earnestly for that strength which could alone enable her to direct it aright.

The next day Cyril told his mother of his engagement to Ethel, receiving as his reply—

“ So I expected : I think you are both very silly, and I give Ethel joy of your serene temper ; however, you'll change your minds, perhaps, before you can marry, unless you mean to live on love. I suppose Kenneth did nothing for you last night ? ”

“ No, my dear mother ; he says there are fourteen applicants now on his books.”

“ Exactly, I wish you both—patience ; ” and with a light laugh, Mrs. Haward walked away, leaving Cyril pacing the room, biting his lip, and railing at

his unlucky fate, which placed happiness within his reach without the power of grasping it.

His unpleasant meditations were interrupted by the voice which had ever power to raise him from depression, and throwing his arm round Ethel, he impressed a long kiss on her forehead, and said—

“Well, dearest, I have told mamma, and she wishes us both—patience.”

“And a very good wish too, dear,” answered Ethel; “but do you know I have greater news than that for you—something I hope you will be glad to hear; I was, very.”

“Then I’m sure I shall be.”

“Well, I have just had a visit from Rebecca, who used to wait on me at the dear old Hall; and she, Cyril dear, came to tell me that she has been to see—nurse!”

Cyril dropped his head, and a momentary flush passed over his face. Ethel continued very quickly:—

“She wished so much to hear of us all: though Rebecca only arrived in London late last night, she lost no time in hastening here to learn what news she could, and transmit them at once to nurse. Rebecca learnt where we were from her brother, who is our boot-maker. And now, dear Cyril, while she is

taking her dinner, we have just time to write nurse a joint letter; and you will tell her that the first opportunity you will run down and see her, will you not, dear?"

"Yes, Ethel; but I dare say she has forgotten me by this time?"

"Do not say so, Cyril, for you cannot think so. I will not tell you all she has suffered on your account, for it would only pain you unnecessarily; you cannot help what she *has* suffered; but you can obliterate it from her recollection by your kindness now; and you will write and give her the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing you once again before she dies—come, dear;" and drawing a small writing-table near him, she playfully placed a pen in his hand, and looking up sweetly at him, dictated—

"My good, kind nurse."

In a moment the gloom vanished from his face as he exclaimed, "How good you are, my Ethel! how shall I ever repay you?"

"By doing as I bid you;" she answered, laughing—and soon a warm, loving letter was written, signed "Your affectionate and grateful children, Julia, Ethel, and Cyril;" for they knew Julia would gladly have added her signature had she been at home.

"There is one missing," said Cyril, in a low voice;

“poor Honoria, how strange we never hear of her, or from her! I think it is deeply annoying to my mother, for she never names her.”

“It must be, indeed. I have an indistinct recollection of her being very beautiful,—she was, was she not?”

“Yes, beautiful!” replied Cyril, “unfortunately for her. We ugly ones,” he added, smiling, “have got on better, and I often think that it is like a judgment visited on my poor mother; and how often it must occur to her—the daughter, she so idolized, for whom she sacrificed herself, and all of us, hoping, as I know she did, that a grand match would repay her, and gratify her ambition, or a wealthy one place her out of the reach of difficulties—that by that child she should be neglected and forgotten; and that to poor little placid despised Julia, she should be actually indebted almost for support. And talking of such a matter of fact thing as money—what is to become of me if I don’t get something to do soon? for I assure you my friends are at a frightfully low ebb.”

“Oh, something will turn up, dear; don’t despair. I never do. I so implicitly rely on the unfailing Wisdom which directs the simplest events, that I never worry myself about the future, I feel so

assured that everything will be arranged for me. If I am to encounter trouble, I shall be strengthened to bear it, because the back is always fitted to the burden ; therefore, I ' take no thought for the morrow,' there is work enough for us in 'to-day.' "

" That is very well in theory, my dear girl ; but I fear it will never answer in practice. Business could never be profitably carried on, if there were no calculations for the future."

" That is another thing,—that is not what I mean. I mean, that people sitting down with folded hands to ponder and lament what *may be*, is, in my humble opinion, not only unwise, but irreligious. No one who believes in the rich promises held out to those who have true faith, should let the day slip by in which they can work, by idly and uselessly thinking of the night, in which they cannot. If the hours of each day are spent in an earnest endeavour to do our duty, we may banish from our mind all fear ; for the ' righteous are never forsaken.' "

" I fear I scarcely deserve that protection. However, I'm not afraid I shall starve, dearest ; because a thousand ways are open to me, to prevent my being in absolute want. But it is of you I am thinking. It is to gain employment by which I shall be enabled to offer you a home that I am so desirous."

"Everything comes in time to him who can wait, dear," answered Ethel smiling; "we are not very old, and in the meanwhile we can learn 'to labour and to wait,' as my favourite, Longfellow, says. Every one should learn that Psalm of Life by heart, for it is a fine lesson. But now I must really go and give this letter to Rebecca, and on Thursday you will go down to nurse, dear, will you not? You had better, for you know I am going to be taken to a party, and you'll be miserable; so I recommend you to go."

"Oh! that horrid ball. I forgot it. Cannot I get asked?"

"No, sir. You'll go down to nurse, like a good boy." And so it was settled: for, as usual, Ethel was triumphant.

That night when the girls sought the room they shared together, Ethel flung her arms round Julia's neck, and called her "sister," and spoke of her bright hopes and grateful heart for all this happiness. Julia could only kiss her, for she feared to speak. Her own secret weighed upon her heart, and turned her thoughts to tears, which gathered now in her eyes, and she moved away that Ethel might not see them. But when the light was extinguished, and Ethel, too excited to sleep, talked

on of Cyril's goodness, of her influence over him, and how amiably he always gave way to her, Julia's tears flowed fast, as she contrasted her position, and thought how she was yielding to a wrong course at the instigation of the man she loved, and how hopeless it appeared that he would ever be subject to her influence, as Cyril was to Ethel's. Most of her present weakness was the result of her early education. Cannot all our future actions be traced to that source? It was the constant habit she had imbibed of giving way to her brother, in those nursery days, when a momentary caprice had induced him to take her toys from her,—that yielding to him invariably, whether he was right or wrong, which had degenerated her naturally docile temper into positive weakness. With the most unselfish and absorbing affection she loved Gerard, and she would follow implicitly where he might lead, always ceasing to press a point the moment she found it objectionable to him. Had she been so fortunate as to meet with one worthy to be her guide, poor Julia's tears would have had no cause to flow; but now, whilst Ethel slept, she lay awake "weeping bitterly."

CHAPTER VII.

"Trifles light as air, are to the jealous
Confirmation strong as proofs of Holy Writ."
Shakespeare.

REBECCA lost no time in posting the letter ; and no small excitement did the sight of the postman create at nurse's cottage door ; and the children, who were at play in the garden, tumbled over one another in their anxiety to convey to Granny the important missive directed to her.

With trembling hands the old dame broke the seal ; but the first line was enough, and she burst into tears. Wonderingly the children looked at her, and creeping silently away they hurried to their mother, to tell her the nasty postman had brought Granny a letter that made her cry, and entreated her to come and comfort her : but the moment Cicely saw her, she knew they were tears of joy ; and patiently stood beside her, waiting till the poor old woman had voice to tell her what it was.

Over and over again was the letter read ; and finally, placed in the folds of the snow-white handkerchief. And Cicely was asked to answer it, and

communicate a piece of news which would doubtless be very interesting to them.

A gentleman had called the day before, having been recommended in the village to apply there for a nurse for an invalid child. He said he wished to place him with some respectable person in the country, accustomed to the care of children, as his sad state of health rendered him a fatiguing charge for his mother; and he had given his name as Heathfield, saying, with some pomposity, his wife had been the celebrated beauty—Miss Haward !

Nurse cleverly concealed her delight at this intelligence, determining to convey it as soon as possible to the Hawards; and consented to receive the child immediately, though at very low terms, for he was Cyril's nephew.

All this, in Cicely's strange hieroglyphics, was conveyed to Ethel, and nurse's rapture told too, and how she should count the days till Monday, and it was just sealed and sent by one of the children to the post when Mr. Heathfield drove up. He left the carriage first, and then lifted out a very sad and sickly looking child, who appeared to walk with much difficulty up the small garden.

On his entrance into the cottage, Mr. Heathfield, in the most courteous manner and the blindest

tones, desired nurse, who had risen, to be seated, saying—

“I have brought my poor invalid, Mrs. Fenton, and have no doubt but that a week or two of your care will do much towards restoring our darling to health.”

“Should he require medical advice, sir, at any time, to whom shall I apply?”

“Write me a line to the Reform Club, and I will send my physician. But, I trust, that will be quite unnecessary; good air and attention is, I believe, all he requires. What charming children!” he continued, smiling at Cicely’s little fat brood, who, clustered together, were staring at the strangers, and who looked fatter and rosier than ever, in comparison with the pale, sickly child, whose little thin hand still timidly grasped his father’s.

“My grand-children, sir,” said nurse; “I hope Master Heathfield will soon do our country air as much credit.”

“I hope so, indeed. Now, my dear child,” said Mr. Heathfield to his poor boy, “you must let Papa go; and you must be very good and happy with these kind people, who are going to make you quite well.”

The child instantly released his hold of his father’s

hand, and looked half-inclined to cry; but nurse lifted him up in her lap, and spoke to him in her gentle voice, so kindly, that the poor boy laid his head on her shoulder and seemed quite content to stay with any one who would be good to him. With a few more words of civility Mr. Heathfield departed; and nurse continued to hold and gaze upon the child so nearly related to the boy she so loved, and whom again she appeared to be fondling, in the person of his nephew.

At length she placed him in her own arm-chair, and bade the children watch him, while she went to her room to get some treasured relics of days gone by, to amuse him; and soon returned, bearing with her the donkey, which was before alluded to in these pages, and one or two more of Cyril's neglected toys.

A sickly smile stole over the child's face, as Cicely's good-natured children exhibited the feats the donkey could perform, till tears rose to nurse's eyes as she watched the little group; for again the old nursery, tenanted by the little beings she had loved so well, rose before her, and caused that painful feeling which occurs when memory carries us back to that Past which can never return. But then a bright ray came to cheer her, for she remembered

there were but a few days to Thursday—that red-letter day in her calendar—when again her longing eyes would rest on him they had so yearned to see.

How well it is for the poor pilgrims through this world of many disappointments, that Mercy lends them Hope to lead them on, throwing so strong a light on that which is to come, that what has gone before lies hid in a deep shadow. Amongst the innumerable instances of that Divine wisdom which orders all things, none is more wise or more merciful than the veiling of Futurity; for who would not gladly lay down life's burden, if, on starting, they but knew the rough and toilsome road they must travel ere their pilgrimage is ended?

Ethel had promised the friends who were to take her to the ball that she would go early, and dress and sleep at their house; so that, about one o'clock on that day, she walked into the room where Cyril was reading, to wish him good-bye.

"What time are you going, dear?" she asked, as she found him still in his morning-dress.

"Oh, I don't know; certainly not until I have taken you."

"That will make you so late, dear; and you will lose the train if you don't go by the two o'clock;

there is no other stops at that station until a very late one. The servant is going with me."

"No, no; I don't like that: I particularly object to your walking about town with a female servant," he answered, petulantly. "I shall go with you."

"Oh, don't, dear!—indeed you'll lose the train; you have to dress, and it is a long walk. Don't come; the last train will make it so late."

"Well, my dear child, I'm not compelled to be back to-night. I suppose there's such a thing as an inn in the place; and as you will be at a ball, you will not miss me this evening."

Not noticing the last part of his speech, Ethel said, "But that will add so needlessly to the expense, dear Cyril."

"Oh, very well," he added, with a bitter smile; "I will not go, if you do not *wish* me. Go by yourself, pray." And he took up his book, and resumed his reading.

There was an instant's pause, and then Ethel laid her hand on his shoulder, and in a low but firm voice said, "I do not wish you to go with me, Cyril, for the simple reason I have stated. So, good-bye, dearest. I hope sincerely you will leave here by a train which will give you time to return to-night,

because I should be so sorry not to see you to-morrow morning as soon as I arrive."

Cyril looked up at her, and, springing from his chair, said, "Do not look at me with that quiet face, and speak to me in those gentle tones, when I am so provokingly disagreeable; it would make no earthly impression if you flew in a passion; but that face—"

"I know," answered Ethel, smiling. "Go by the first train, and come home to-night—promise."

"I do—I do, my own darling;" and, with many foolish, lover-like suggestions about not forgetting him (which she must have had a very short memory to do in one day), and not go and compare him with all the handsome men she would see at the party, and like them best,—he let her go, watched her out of sight, and then returned to his book, to finish the chapter he was reading, before he went to dress; and he had arrived at the last word, and was on the point of closing the book, when the door opened, and the servant announced Mr. Forrester.

"Not gone out—I'm fortunate."

"No," answered Cyril, hesitatingly.

"You are going out of town, Miss Ashworth told me."

"Did you meet Ethel, then?" asked Cyril, somewhat eagerly.

"Yes, I did," answered Forrester; and a strange smile passed over his face, and he turned away his head as though to hide it; but a searching glance was on him, and the smile was noticed.

"What made you smile, Forrester?"

"Did I?—I was thinking, and I suppose that made me smile,—thinking how a few short years bring with them so much experience, and how credulous some persons are."

"But how could Ethel's name have conjured such a thought?"

"Simply because by her advice you rejected mine."

"What do you mean?—with respect to telling my mother of—"

"Exactly. I had a reason for offering you that counsel, and can only now sorrow with you, if you, as I suspect you will, suffer for your neglect of my suggestion."

"Had it concerned myself alone, Forrester, I might have acted on it; but Ethel's happiness is now my only concern: she differed from you. It would have worried, distressed her: and, let the consequences to me be what they may, to her wishes I shall invariably yield; and never, Forrester, while Ethel and I stand in our present position,

shall a thought or action of mine be concealed from her."

Again that smile, that same smile which had been as the evil genius of his boyhood, passed over his friend's face, as he answered—

"Very pretty, very romantic."

"You are not in love, Forrester, or you would feel as I do:—but do tell me, for I have a silly curiosity to know, why meeting Ethel, or talking of her, should have caused you to think of credulity, eh?"

Cyril smiled as he said this; but suddenly a fresh idea occurred to him, and starting from his seat, he said, very earnestly and impetuously—

"She was *alone*, Forrester?"

"Yes, she was alone."

"Then why am I over-credulous?—for I cannot talk in riddles,—and it is me you mean."

"I do not wish to speak in riddles; but when I speak plainly, you do not heed. I tell you again, what I told you the other day, you are most unwise to place your happiness in the keeping of so young a girl: a girl who has seen nothing of the world, who cannot know her own mind, and who may make you very miserable. Love her if you will, but why engage yourself to her. Should you see the necessity

of breaking this foolish and hastily contracted engagement, imagine the host of female friends who will condemn you, and set you down as a monster of iniquity ;”—and he laughed his old scornful laugh.

“ I should have considered myself equally bound, in honour, Forrester, to fulfil my engagement, if it had only passed my lips to Ethel herself, however much I might afterwards repent it. So that I could secure her happiness, my own would have been very secondary.”

“ But in the destruction of yours it is quite possible to involve hers. How would it be if, true to her promise to you, she *married* you—*loving* another ?”

“ Forrester, you are torturing me,” said Cyril, in an agitated voice : “ you know more than you say ; in heaven’s name speak, and save us both, or rack me not with doubts that would never enter my head but by your instigation. If Ethel has mistaken her feelings for me, and—and she loves some more fortunate being, poor girl ! no promise to me shall wreck her happiness,—that happiness I value so much dearer than my own. I beseech you, tell me all you know.”

“ My good fellow, I know nothing very tangible :

I was putting a case, that you might see more plainly the force of my argument."

"One more question, Forrester," said Cyril—and as he spoke there was an expression of so much pain in his open, ingenuous face, that it would have grieved a kindly heart to gaze on—"one more question: would you offer this advice if any other than Ethel possessed my love?"

A strange and somewhat startled expression passed over his friend's face; but it vanished in a moment, and he answered calmly—

"No, Haward, unless she was like Ethel; you press me so hard, that though I do not wish to pain you, I must tell you what has caused my anxiety—I have strong reason to doubt Ethel's constancy; it may be only manner, I admit, but that manner will, to one of so susceptible a nature as you are, be productive of eternal annoyances between you. She has known me since her childhood, it is true—I do not wish to appear a coxcomb; but really *I*—I can only say I was astonished when I heard she had pledged her faith to you; and, in short, it impressed me with the opinion that Ethel is a confirmed coquette."

As these words were uttered, they rang one by one on the ear of him who listened, like the heavy strokes

of a hammer on an anvil. Louder, much louder than they were spoken did they sound to him, and seemed to echo in the room even after they had ceased—Ethel a coquette! Ethel, the bright meteor of his childhood, the guiding star of his later years, the truth-loving, noble-hearted Ethel, a coquette! capable of accepting his devoted love—loving the man she professed to dislike and avoid! Was this possible? yes, it must be! her anxiety to prevent his going out with her, proved her intention to meet Forrester: how noble of him to put him on his guard, and how kindly he had endeavoured to preserve him from this painful knowledge!

He rose from his seat, and in a voice so altered that any but his ruthless tormenter would have relented, held out his hand and said—

“Thank you, Forrester, for this, and all other proofs of your interest: add another kindness to the many which you heap on me, and do not come here for a day or two—let us meet elsewhere.”

“As you wish, my dear Haward; but what object will that effect?”

“None—none but sparing me the pain of witnessing her duplicity; in a few days I shall, I hope, be enabled to get away somewhere; all ambition is now gone—I care not what employment I undertake.”

“ Gently, gently, my good fellow ; let not a single opinion have power to distress you thus. I may have been too vain—Ethel, only giddy ; the object of my advice is not to condemn her, or distress you ; but to enforce caution, prudence, and watchfulness. As much as possible avoid publicity with respect to your engagement—and in the meanwhile judge for yourself. Take heart—I shall see you a happy man, if not in the way you now think the only way, in some other, perhaps more advantageous ; some brighter face than the one you now worship may be the attraction, and you and I may laugh together over the boyish love which could thus pale your cheek.”

“ Laugh ! never, Forrester : the destruction of all hope may eventually destroy love ; but never will the recollection of the holiest feeling of my nature be a subject for mirth, or the remembrance of how early my belief in purity and goodness was destroyed, be other than a painful reminiscence ; and never will I raise another idol in my heart, whose only pedestal would be the ruins of the first.”

The old smile stole over Forrester's face ; but Cyril saw it not, he had covered his eyes with his hands, for burning tears were gathering in them, which he strove in vain to repress. Forrester spoke two or

three times to him, but though he heard the sound, he heeded not the sense.

Long he sat in deep thought, he knew not how long. When he at length looked up, he was alone ; the buhl clock on the mantel-piece chimed, in its musical tones, the half-hour past three ; he sprung from his seat, and as though the words were now spoken in his ears like an echo, he heard,—

“Cyril, you have broken your promise ; I am so sorry.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,
Or else my heart, concealing it, will break.”

Shakespeare.

BRILLIANTLY were Mrs. Arthur Capel's rooms illuminated, and gay was the assemblage crowded in them, when Ethel entered, and she felt at first almost bewildered. The confusion and glare to which she was unaccustomed, the extreme heat and overpowering smell of the bouquets,—all seemed to her on first entering most anti-agreeable ; but she slipped into a quiet seat near an open window, and soon growing used to the light, so as to be able to see

what was going on, she became amused, and forgot her first unpleasant impressions. The young ladies with whom she came were engaged to dance, and so left her immediately, but she had their mother for a companion, who took the next unoccupied seat.

"Oh! who is that lovely woman?" at length, she eagerly asked; "there on the couch, next to the old lady in the turban."

"I don't know, dear—very handsome, isn't she?"

The lady merited the admiration bestowed on her. She was dressed in a white terry velvet gown, with a deep berthe of point-lace fastened with damask-roses, mounted with diamonds; the same ornaments in her hair, which was very light, and dressed in full *crêpé* curls.

"There is something peculiarly interesting about her to me; I must try and find out who she is. I seem to know her, too."

"Will you dance, Miss Ashworth?" said Mrs. Capel, bringing a very tall, insipid-looking young man up to her.

Ethel felt very much disposed to say "no," but a glance at the heated, fatigued face of her hostess—which seemed to speak of having dragged this hopeless young man through the crowd, to dozens of young ladies in vain—decided her, and she took the lean

arm offered to her, and moved away. Mrs. Capel whispered hurriedly to her *chaperone*—"His father is in Parliament, and he has very good expectations,"—which information was entirely lost on good, innocent Mrs. Carpenter, who puzzled herself during the whole quadrille, as to why Mrs. Capel had volunteered it; for though Mrs. Carpenter had four unmarried daughters, it never occurred to her that there was the slightest necessity for them to be married, although she had no doubt, at some period of their lives, they would be; and she certainly was not under the impression that she had brought either them or Miss Ashworth to the party with any view to their settlement in life. Many were the match-making mothers she had confounded by her simple answers to their questions about her anxiety for her daughters, and they were soon silenced by her quiet, kind hope, that her dear children would marry when they liked, and be as happy as she had been.

Ethel's quadrille was as stupid as she expected, as her partner only ventured one remark, and that was a very evident fact, that he felt very warm; and so she was truly glad when it was over, though she was still under the necessity of going through that most unpleasant proceeding of parading up and down the room in that peculiar style, resembling—without its

light-heartedness and joyousness—the childish game of “follow-my-leader.” However, it was soon interrupted by a gentleman with whom she was slightly acquainted.

“I beg your pardon, Miss Ashworth,” he said, “but there is a lady here who wishes particularly to see you; she claims an old acquaintanceship, and will be so glad if you will come and speak to her for a few moments in the small drawing-room;” and offering his arm, which Ethel accepted with some astonishment, they pushed their way through the crowded room to an inner and smaller room—comfortably arranged with couches and lounging-chairs—opening into a conservatory, forming a most agreeable retreat from the heated ball-room, with its uncomfortable cane-seats and crowds of occupants.

In one of these lounging-chairs sat the lady of Ethel’s admiration, who sprung from her seat as she entered, and holding out both her hands to her, said in a low and tremulous voice,—

“Ethel, do you not recollect me?”

A half uttered “no” was rising to Ethel’s lips, when the lady continued—“Not remember Honoria! but how should you, poor child? I am not Honoria Haward *now*.”

“Honoriam!” exclaimed Ethel, “oh, how glad I am,

dear Honoria !” And forgetting she was in company, unmindful of the astonished glance such an exhibition of feeling might have occasioned, she flew to her, and embraced her long and earnestly ; and then, as if ashamed, she said, “ Forgive me, I could not help it.” But they had had no witnesses of their meeting ; for the young man, with very good taste, had left the room.

“ Forgive you ! aye, and thank you for the first burst of affection which has gladdened my heart for years ; and that I may again rejoice in it, come to me to-morrow, and let me hear those sweet tones of kindness again, and relieve my burdened heart of its too long concealed sorrow, for here it is impossible. Come to me then to-morrow, dear, at eleven o’clock, at Long’s Hotel, where we are staying. Do not fail me, I entreat.”

“ No, dear Honoria, rely on me. I have much to tell, more to hear, and I will be with you. I sleep to-night with the people who brought me here, and I will come to you before I go home. How much I shall have to tell them !”

“ More than my mother will like to hear, I fancy. They are all well ?”

“ Quite well, dear.”

“ I shall hear all about them to-morrow. I dare not

stay now ; already I have over-stayed the time I was desired to return at. I know not why I came ; gaiety is not in accordance with my feelings, but it seems as though Providence had sent me here to find a friend."

" Charles," she continued, as Ethel's conductor re-entered the room, " take Miss Ashworth back to her *chaperone*, and then kindly see about my carriage, will you ?"

" Certainly, but you look pale—ill ; let me get you some wine."

" No, no," answered Honoria, impetuously, " do as I ask you. Why will people always suggest something one does not want, instead of doing what one does want ? Go quickly with Ethel, and come back to me." And once more entreating Ethel not to fail her, she flung herself back on the couch to await the return of the aforesaid Charles, and began again the old irritable movement of her foot, while a bitter smile rested on her lips.

" Yes, yes," she murmured, " my turn is now come, and I am no longer friendless if that girl's face speaks truly. Now shall the world know what the pattern-husband really is, and that there is such a thing as a bad *man* and an injured woman."

" I am ready, Mrs. Heathfield," said a voice at her elbow ; " let me take you to your carriage."

She rose, took the offered arm, and proceeded down stairs without a word. Her friend shawled her, placed her in her carriage, and wishing her good night, asked permission to call in the morning, receiving for reply a hasty shake of the head.

The charm of the party, if it had ever possessed any for her, was now lost to Ethel, for her thoughts were entirely absorbed by Honoria ; and she longed for the ball to be over, and the night to be passed, that she might renew her interview with Cyril's evidently unhappy sister.

She was seated in one of the recesses of the room, occupied by her own thoughts, when her attention was attracted by a pair of very earnest eyes rivetted on her. She was embarrassed by the gaze, and turned her head another way ; but she felt that those strange eyes still rested on her.

In a few more moments she was addressed by Mrs. Capel:—

“ Miss Ashworth, a friend of mine is wishing to be introduced to you ; will you permit me ? Mr. Graham—Miss Ashworth.” And looking up, Ethel perceived the “ strange eyes ” at Mrs. Capel's side.

“ I have demanded this honour, Miss Ashworth,” spoke her new acquaintance, “ from a deep interest in the fate of Cyril Haward ; as I learn that you

form one of his family circle. I was his tutor at school," he continued, as Ethel gazed at him in apparent astonishment, "and though, by diligent inquiry, I have learnt that he is living in London, and well, I can hear no more; and I therefore ventured to intrude myself upon you, in the hope of obtaining some more information."

Blushing slightly as she answered, Ethel said, "I am sure Mr. Haward will be pleased to hear of your constant interest in him. I have heard him often speak gratefully of you."

"Ah! he was a nice boy, Miss Ashworth—a warm-hearted, affectionate boy. Is he still intimate with Forrester?"

"Yes, very," replied Ethel; and for some reason she looked earnestly at her interrogator. He shook his head slightly, and sighed gently—so very gently, that it would have been unobserved, save by one so interested as Ethel.

"Very intimate," he repeated, half aloud; "and is Cyril in any profession—any employment, now? Forgive me for being so troublesome; but I am so interested."

Forgive him! He little thought how interesting the theme, and how he might have talked on it for hours to his unwearied listener,—how the low tone of

his voice was sweeter music to her ear than the fine band pouring forth its melodious strain; for it spoke a name which made her heart thrill with joy.

"He is unemployed, just now," she said, somewhat tremblingly, as the rapid thought passed through her mind of how happy she would be when he was employed; "but he is anxiously looking for something to suit him."

"Do you think I might take the liberty of calling on him?"

"Oh, yes!" she said; and she told him their address: and then led him back to Cyril's school-days, and drank in eagerly all he told her of his good disposition, of his aptitude at his studies, of his energetic and impetuous nature, and how, by a proper Influence—for that he was so susceptible of influence—he might be made a noble being; and a glorious smile lighted up Ethel's face, as she hoped that she might be the humble instrument in the hands of Providence to effect this. Poor Ethel! it were hard to disappoint her—hard to show how futile her labour of love, how evil is sometimes permitted to be more powerful than good,—hard that her earnest, unceasing prayers should seem unanswered. Yet, if it be so, she will find her reward in an approving conscience, that unerring judge, who

in its still small voice will whisper, "Be of good comfort—you have done what you could."

"Does this scene amuse you?" Graham asked, when the conversation at length changed.

"Not particularly," answered Ethel; "I am not very fond of parties."

"I have no right here whatever," he continued; "for I neither dance, nor play at cards, nor sing; nor do anything but be very much in the way—and so I told Mrs. Capel; but she would not hear of my refusing. I am her son's private tutor, and he does me the honour of being very fond of me; so his mother is, in consequence, always most attentive,—but I would far rather be at home of an evening. My heart is always there, and my thoughts."

Ethel had no time to reply; for she was summoned by Mrs. Carpenter to go home. Graham took her to the carriage; and of course it was immense fun to tease her all the way home, about the conquest she had made; for the girls would hear no explanations of the reason of her prolonged conversation with Graham. And Ethel went to bed and to sleep, mingling in her dreams, Graham, Cyril, and Honoria.

As soon as possible the next morning, Ethel flew rather than walked to the hotel. Ushered into one

of the largest rooms, she waited for some moments, and then, the door opening admitted Honoria. But how different did she look from the brilliant beauty of the previous night ! Pale, and wretchedly thin ; her eyes seeming to possess an unearthly brilliance ; dressed in a loose morning-gown of India muslin, with a close lace cap, beneath which her hair, streaked with grey, was closely braided, and wrapped in a cashmere shawl, Ethel could scarcely believe her the same person, till her warm and affectionate welcome assured her it was indeed Honoria.

“ Good girl, to come,” she said, as with her own hands she removed Ethel’s bonnet and smoothed her glossy hair ; “ we have two hours to ourselves, and then, my charming husband will condescend to allow me to write for him for the rest of the day.”

“ And you are very wretched, dear Honoria ?” said Ethel, looking with sincere compassion in her pale face.

“ Not now, Ethel ; I am stupified : I was wretched, how wretched I cannot tell you. But I think when misery becomes irremediable, when one wretchedness follows another as rapidly as in my case, the very weight of agony deadens at length the sense of pain, and we only wonder how much more we can and are to bear. I should horrify you, Ethel, were I to relate all I have borne since I married this inhuman

monster. I would not sully your ears with the tales of his coarse brutality, or show you what your inexperience would scarcely credit—the wickedness that exists in this world; but before I tell you all I wish, let me hear of all at home, Julia, Cyril—Ethel, what a blush!—is it to be *Sister* Ethel? I hope so; I am sure Cyril could not do better.”

Ethel laughed, and answered,—

“I will begin at the beginning, we shall come to that presently.”

And she then proceeded to relate every circumstance she could remember since Honoria's marriage, while she, with bowed head and compressed lips, listened earnestly.

“And so my mother never speaks of me,” she said, as Ethel concluded: “forgets the child she sacrificed to save herself,—not one feeling gratified, not one reward for all I have suffered.” She paused, and two large tears, which had lain concealed by her eyelids, fell on her clasped hands; then suddenly raising her head, she seized Ethel's arm, and said—

“Now listen to me, and tell me, if you can, why on one human being should fall so heavy a share of suffering? What have I done, Ethel, to be so cruelly punished?” She pressed her hands wildly to her head, and then continued—

“ From the moment that the large gates closed on the carriage which bore me away, that brute was unmasked,—the gentlemanlike manner, the low, courteous voice, ceased, and grasping my wrist as though he would have crushed the bones, he said— ‘ Now, understand me, girl ; I am no dupe ; I know why your mother has been so anxious for this match ; but it will not answer. I have bought a beautiful wife, paid my money, and now I have nothing more to do with the seller. I have married you, not your family ; do you understand ? and from this moment I desire you have no further communication with them until I give you permission.’ Astounded by this sudden change, I made no answer ; and then he asked me, still more loudly, if I heard him. I said ‘ yes : ’ it was all I could say. Arrived in Paris, where we went direct, my appearance made some sensation ; and then his temper burst forth in unrestrained fury, and with a violent oath he said, if the men stared at me so, he would shut me up. I laughed. To my high, proud spirit it seemed so absurd. The mocking laugh was too much for him, and seizing a heavy book which was near him, he flung it at me. Instead of my head, it broke a pier-glass at the end of the room. I laughed again ; but my ill-timed mirth cost me dearly. For months

his cruelty never ceased,—months, do I say? good Heaven, when has it ceased?

“We returned at length to England, bringing with us my baby boy,”—and her voice trembled as she spoke,—“my poor sickly boy, our only child, whose birth I had hailed with such joy as some amelioration of my misery; but, alas! he was the innocent cause of more suffering; he was so delicate and ailing. Its constant wailing cry disturbed and irritated its *affectionate* father, and scarce three weeks old, he insisted on its being sent out of the house to nurse. I tried to stand against this cruel mandate, but to no purpose, and my baby went. The woman that had the care of it was a healthy person, living in the country, and the poor child grew stronger; so that when it was my husband’s pleasure to return to England, my boy was allowed to come back to me.

“We came to England, to our own county,—the very neighbourhood of my old home. He wished to stand for Kent; but he knew that you had all left the Hall, although he did not tell me. So, ere he rose in the morning, I flew out to see some of you if I could. Fool that I was, to dream he had humanity enough to bring me near my home, had it been still home! I met your old servant

Rebecca, and from her I heard you had long left, but she could tell me no more. Of course he was triumphant at the election. I wrote him a speech for the hustings; and since, he has left me no peace, no time to myself. I have always my pen in my hand employed for him. And, Ethel, only imagine"—and a passionate burst of tears impeded almost her utterance—"he has taken the boy away again, because—because his wretched health took up too much of my time, and he will not tell me where he is for fear I should go to him."

Ethel sprang from her seat.

"Don't cry, my dear Honoria. I can tell you where he is, and you will be glad, dear, as glad as you can be."

"What!" almost screamed Honoria; "you can! speak then, for mercy's sake."

"Well, dear, he is with nurse; your nurse, Cyril's nurse; and yesterday, I hope, Cyril himself saw him."

"Oh! thank God," ejaculated Honoria. "Where is it? how far is it? let us go now. Can we go?"

"No, no, dear; it is much too far for you to be back in time. I will write you her address, and you can then give her any orders you like about him, and through me she can let you hear every particular of him."

"But I want to see him, Ethel."

"Yes, dear, I know; but you must be patient, because—"

"Don't preach to me of patience, or you will drive me mad: his slender thread of life is all that binds me to earth—that poor shadow of a child is all I love, all I live for, Ethel. But listen,—on Thursday my jailer goes out of town for the day; will you go with me then?—or if you are afraid, I will go by myself,—afraid to countenance a wife in disobedience to her husband."

"I am not, Honoria; but I should like to consider of it, and I will send you word by to-morrow evening. Our time is now short," she continued, glancing at the clock. "I am to tell your mother of this interview?"

"Yes, she ought to know what I have suffered—what I do suffer; only you must all be careful. I do not think you must risk another visit. Perhaps it would be better not to tell her till I see you again. Write to me under cover to my maid, Mrs. Mason; it may be that my indulgent husband will soon give me permission to see my own family. I shall mention having met you at the ball, and try him: but if your consideration leads you to think it right to aid a wretched mother to see her child," she continued,

with a bitter smile, "the carriage shall stop at the top of your street on Thursday, at ten. Hark! one o'clock—go directly;" and with trembling hands she assisted Ethel to resume her bonnet and shawl, and kissing her affectionately, said—

"I may count on one friend, may I not, Ethel?"

"One humble one in this world, dear Honoria! and One above, who never deserts us till we desert Him. Trust in him, and believe me. Good-bye, dear."

Another earnest embrace, and the wretched wife was alone.

Full of intense excitement Ethel hurried home, feeling it would be most difficult to keep her secret from Mrs. Haward, but determined, at least, to tell Cyril at once. Her first demand, therefore, was for him.

"Mr. Cyril has not returned, Miss," was the reply.

"Not returned. Then he slept at Haverley, I suppose," she thought; and with a feeling of disappointment she went up stairs to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Haward was working there,—rather an unusual thing, and which only occurred when Mrs. Haward had been very much annoyed. She always, under those circumstances, found some piece of work

upon which she silently and indefatigably employed herself for the remainder of the day.

As Ethel opened the door, she said—

“ Oh ! so you’ve come home, at last.”

“ Yes. Am I later than you expected ?”

“ Oh dear no. I make a rule never to expect my family ; as when they go out, they always remain as long as it suits them, without consulting me.”

Ethel saw something was wrong, and not wishing to irritate her by replying, turned to leave the room. As her hand touched the lock, Mrs. Haward said—

“ Of course you know Mr. Cyril has not been home all night.”

“ Yes. I did not much expect he would.”

Mrs. Haward for the first time laid down her work.

“ You did not much expect he would ! Then perhaps, Miss Ashworth, you can enlighten me as to where my son is ?”

“ At Haverley, ma’am, I believe. Gone to see nurse. Did not you know ?”

“ I did not know,—nor do I believe that such is the case, seeing he left my house at nine o’clock last night. I should scarcely imagine he chose such an hour for a journey. I heard some absurd nonsense about a visit to Mrs. Fenton, but I found it was abandoned, as he dined at home, with his friend

Mr. Forrester, and left here, as I tell you, at nine o'clock, since which he has never appeared."

The colour forsook Ethel's cheek as she listened.

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Haward, are you not very anxious, very alarmed at his absence?"

"Oh dear no; Mr. Forrester was with him. If anything was the matter, I should have heard. You had better take off your bonnet; if you want any luncheon, Julia will be home immediately."

Slowly Ethel proceeded to her own room, where she flung herself into the first chair, and remained in deep thought. She forgot that Cyril had broken his word to her, forgot all but her anxiety to know where he could be—what could be the matter,—and when Julia, on her return, entered the room, she flew to her arms, and burst into tears, and it was some moments ere she could compose herself to tell Julia the cause.

"My dear girl, pray dry those unnecessary tears: then, Cyril is quite well and down stairs,—he and Gerard Forrester came in together, this moment."

"Really, Julia? oh! I am so glad. I was so frightened. Where have they been?"

"Oh! my dear, they have made mamma think they could not return; some very plausible tale, we shall hear when we go down: dry those pretty eyes, therefore," she continued, smiling, "and let us go."

Julia was quite in spirits: Maude had told her—"Gerard had been out all the evening, because he would not meet an heiress they wanted him to marry; he was so tiresome."

Of course, this to Julia was proof of his love for her, and she was so happy. Poor Julia!

"Now you must bathe those very red eyes—here, try some rose-water, dear." Ethel took the bottle, and while she bathed her eyes, told Julia of her interesting interview with Honoria, and explained to her that Mrs. Haward was not to know it, for fear of any indiscretion on her part, which might induce Mr. Heathfield to remove his wife from their neighbourhood.

"I did mean to tell Cyril; but on second thoughts I shall not, for he is so impetuous, he would insist on seeing Honoria, and might spoil all. We must be very cautious, and you will keep the secret."

Julia of course promised to do so, but expressed an earnest hope that she might go and see her sister. Ethel said she would try and manage it for her; and again urging the necessity for secrecy, they proceeded down stairs together, Julia's thoughts actually diverted from Gerard, for the time, by this unexpected intelligence.

When the girls entered the dining-room they

found the young men alone. Forrester rose and came forward ; but Cyril, with a face of ashy paleness, remained seated. Ethel went to him, and holding out her hand, said in a low voice —

“ I am so glad to see you, dearest ; I was quite terrified at your absence.”

Cyril started—took her hand eagerly, and then as suddenly dropping it, said, bitterly —

“ You must have been very anxious.”

In an instant Ethel saw he was angry, and she turned quietly away and sat down at the table ; to eat was impossible, so she took up the paper and pretended to read, while she endeavoured to solve this mystery. Julia and Forrester were talking and eating gaily ; but Cyril neither spoke nor ate.

It was one of the afternoons on which the masters came to her pupils, so Julia had to return ; and Forrester offered to go with her, and they rose from the table.

“ Now Cyril will have an opportunity of explaining,” thought Ethel ; but her expectations were instantly disappointed by his proposal to go with them.

“ Oh ! you had better not, Cyril,” said Julia, whose delightful *tête-à-tête* with Forrester he was thus about to spoil—“ you look so tired.”

“ No, I’m not at all tired ; I’d rather go,” he

persisted ; and, seizing his hat, he prepared to follow Forrester and the disappointed Julia.

Ethel's heart beat so fast, she could scarcely speak ; but before he reached the door, she managed to say—

“ One word, Cyril ; you did not go to nurse, did you ? ”

“ No, no—I had my reasons,” he answered, sharply, and without turning his head, left the room.

Amazed and angry too, Ethel sat where he had left her for some time, and then went to her own room, where, pleading indisposition, she remained all day, for Cyril did not again dine at home, and she could not make up her mind to sit through dinner, and talk on indifferent subjects with her heart so full.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Patience ! accomplish thy labour—accomplish thy work of affection.

Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is god-like.”

Longfellow.

WHILE Ethel is thus spending solitary and wretched hours in her own room, Cyril is at the Forresters, where he is going to remain and dine, to be spared the pain of seeing Ethel ; entirely regardless of what she must, in the meanwhile, be suffering from his

altered manner. Induced to believe by that persuasive voice—which, alas! never spoke to him in vain—that Ethel's conscience must make her perfectly understand the cause of his evident annoyance, he only considered how he should spare himself from any added suffering; and so willingly listened to Forrester's counsel of avoiding her as much as possible.

“At what hour do we dine, sir?” said Forrester to his father.

“Six, I believe.”

“I shall just have time, then, for a letter I wish to write; so, Cyril, I will not apologise for leaving you, in such good company: the girls, too, will be here shortly.”

“Go, by all means,” said Cyril. And Forrester went into the library, always vacated at this time by the young ladies and Julia, and sat down to write the following letter:—

“DEAR FRED,—As I have left you a considerable time to wonder at my silence, and suggest a variety of reasons for it, I will now inform you of the right one, which is, I dare say, the only one you have not thought of, my dear fellow, utter forgetfulness of you altogether. I acknowledge all the ingratitude of

this, with your last letter now open before me, containing your pressing invitation; and will make the best reparation I can, by accepting your offer. Yes, —I will actually gladden you with the light of my presence. I am sick of London fog and English dulness,—and long for a peep at your sunny skies, and sparkling beauties. I shall bring with me one who has been so many times the subject of our letters, Cyril Haward; whom, I dare say, you have some curiosity to see. We shall stop, though a short time, in Paris; so that from there I will write and fix the exact time for being with you. And now to answer the other portions of your letter,—over which I had a good laugh, for it appears to me that you have turned field-preacher. But, my dear fellow, unfortunately your first sermon has not been successful. If there is one thing on which I pride myself more than another, it is inflexibility: my decision once made, is as irrevocable as that of the Medes and Persians. For, as long back as my memory will serve, I have had my own way,—no one has ever thwarted me till now. But their triumph is not quite complete: I am not vanquished yet; the game is still in my own hands, and I rest not till I have won it.

“In one thing you are right. I did love *Her*. She scorned me! she shall rue it. Fred, there is that about

her which would have made me a happier,—it may be, a better man : her little hand, as a child, touching mine, soothed me in my maddest moments ; her voice, her sweet, tranquil eyes,—all had an influence over me, which I sought to secure for life. I would have been content to lay aside my pride, and be her slave—be guided by her simplest word for ever ; and then he, the poor weak fool, whom the waving of a straw would turn from his purpose, came between us, and she loved him—not me. Frederick, they shall not marry : my love has passed away,—but to part these two is an object worth living for, and I will accomplish it.

“ Respecting Julia, you talk childishly. What does the truth of my love matter to her ? to love me forms the happiness of her dreary life, and to believe I return it. I shall marry her when it suits me—because I like a home, and she will make it comfortable. Her disposition is exactly what I like,—docile as possible ; she bends implicitly to my will, and loves me with an unchanging devotion, which is pleasing to one’s self-love.

“ Now I think I have condescended immensely—more so than I have ever done to any human being ; but I have a certain respect for you, because you are not afraid to express or abide by your opinion.

"Well, till we meet in sunny Seville, adieu! If your beautiful cousin is with you, give her my most respectful homage; and to your wife, all that is proper. I wonder she permits Inez to dwell beneath the same roof. But then you always were so good!

"Ever yours,

"GERARD FORRESTER."

As he closed and sealed this letter, Cyril entered the room.

"Well," said Forrester, "has my father persuaded you to go?"

"Yes, he has; he has been very kind—given me several letters of introduction to some merchants, who will perhaps employ me; and Heaven grant they may, so that I need never set foot in this land again."

"Courage, Haward! you may yet be proud to bring a Spanish beauty to England as your bride, to astonish some who perhaps triumph at your sorrow now."

Cyril made no answer, only sighed; and Forrester continued—

"When shall we start—Monday, is that too soon for you?"

"Oh, no! it cannot be too soon. And do I under-

stand your generous offer to be my banker for the present?"

"Most assuredly; I am only too willing to serve so agreeable a companion."

"I shall never be able to thank you—"

"Dinner is ready, I've no doubt," interrupted Forrester; "come, let us go to the drawing-room."

When Cyril reached home at night, it was very late; Forrester had kept him drinking, and made him promise to breakfast with him in the morning: and so he sat up to write Ethel a letter, to be given her after his departure. Several times he had been prompted to speak to her, and tell her all the wretchedness of the last day or two; but his evil genius held him fast in his toils, and he was silent: and so poor Ethel, after a sleepless night, through which she longed for daylight, to see Cyril, and endeavour to draw from him an explanation, hurried down to breakfast, to find a few lines to Mrs. Haward, left by Cyril, to say he should not be at home to breakfast, and the following from Honoria, for her:—

"For Heaven's sake, go and see my boy yourself; his wretched mother is denied the happiness. I am dragged to-day to Paris; why, I know not, save that he may have discovered my intention. He

does not think it beneath a gentleman to pay people to spy my actions, and, doubtless, Mason has betrayed me. What will not people do for money? and, God knows, I have learnt to suspect everybody. I cannot even tell you where to write to me; but I shall feel satisfied if I know you will go. You need not now wait till Thursday. Tell my boy his mother has not deserted him willingly, but never ceases to love and pray for him.

“Your most miserable,

“HONORIA.”

“Poor dear Honoria!” she said; “and I am fretting for half-an-hour’s misunderstanding: how silly, thinking myself miserable for so slight a cause! Dear Cyril, I will ask him to take me to Haverley; he won’t refuse.”

But, bitter disappointment! he came not: the hours flew by—she watched from the window untiringly, and still he came not; and so at length she determined to tell Mrs. Haward all about Honoria. She rather dreaded it; but, having never shrank from a duty in her life, she went up to Mrs. Haward’s room, and, finding her alone, instantly began her tale; and, to her great surprise, Mrs. Haward, bursting into a violent fit of weeping, said she would do

The old woman gazed at her searchingly, and then said, eagerly seizing her hand—

“ Oh, my dear, yes, that I do, Miss Ethel! How is he—my dear boy—Master Cyril? Was he ill, that he did not come that day? I was so disappointed.”

“ No, nurse—l—he couldn’t—”

“ I have come, Mrs. Fenton,” interrupted Mrs. Haward, “ to see Mrs. Heathfield’s child. Can I see him?”

“ Oh dear yes, ma’am, certainly. Poor lamb, he’s out there looking at the others playing; he’s no strength to play himself.”

“ Is he so ill, then?” asked Ethel.

“ So weak and delicate, my dear! I’ll fetch him;” and nurse left the room to bring the poor boy to see his relations. She soon returned, leading that little shadow of a child by the hand; and Mrs. Haward started back in horror. That her child’s son—that thing—the offspring of her glorious Honoria! was it possible!

Its little pale wizened face, so old, so thin, with large wild eyes, which it fixed in terror on the strangers; its thin, wasted limbs, and high, narrow shoulders. Mrs. Haward made no movement towards him, only that exclamation of dismay; but Ethel ran to him, and taking him in her arms kissed him fondly,

and spoke in a low, loving, encouraging voice, which seemed to please the child, for the wild, startled glance was exchanged for one of pleased astonishment; and he stroked her face softly and then laid his head on her shoulder trustingly and quietly, whilst Mrs. Haward, somewhat recovering from her first unpleasant surprise, began to ask nurse questions about him.

“ Oh, poor dear, he's not long for this world. All I can do he gets no better, ma'am. I wish his poor ma' could see how bad he is—they take no notice of him. I have my money paid me regularly, but no letter comes—nothing to say they remember him. Mr. Heathfield told me if he were worse I was to write to him. I did think of doing so, but really, ma'am, no doctor could do him any good that I see; and he is no worse than when he brought him, but he is no better.”

“ It is his poor mother who has asked us to come and see him. She was coming herself, but that horrid man has taken her off to Paris; she begged us therefore to come.”

“ Dear heart, it's very sad—very sad, indeed. Do you think, ma'am, I might buy him some clothes? it's scarce worth while to buy much; but lor, ma'am, he hasn't as many changes as my grand-children.”

" Bless me, nurse, how shameful ! of course, buy him what he wants. I will take care you are repaid."

While they continued thus talking about the poor boy, Ethel was engaged in amusing him ; and very much he was amused, for she was telling him some childish story, in a low but very cheerful voice, and in a simple language suited to his understanding ; so that, when at length it was time to go, there was some ingenuity required to unfasten the little arms which he had wound lovingly about her neck, and prevent a passion of tears at her departure.

It was with a heavy heart, and long, lingering look she went, for she felt she was gazing her last at that frail form which seemed wasting before her eyes.

Nurse, she kissed very fondly, and promised to give her earnest message to Cyril to come and see her.

" Do ask him, Miss Ethel, to let me once more look at him."

" Indeed, I will do all I can, dear nurse," she answered ; and then she followed Mrs. Haward, who had hurried away from what she called " all this folly."

On reaching home the servant said Mr. Cyril had been in for a few moments, and left a note for his mother ; it was on the drawing-room table—only a few lines.

"DEAR MOTHER,—At last you will get rid of me; I leave England on Monday with Forrester, bearing several letters of introduction to foreign merchants. I trust I shall be successful in finding *permanent* employment abroad. I do not dine at home to-day—but will see you to-morrow.

C. H."

"Good gracious, what does the boy mean!" she said, as she concluded the note, which she had read aloud.

"Oh! now, pray, Ethel, don't make a scene; I am quite sufficiently knocked up without that. You ought to be very glad that he has at last thought of something to do; you know you stand a better chance of getting married by his going to seek his fortune," she continued, softening a little, as she watched the increasing ashy paleness of the poor girl—"here, take my salts, and lie down on the sofa; you're tired, I dare say."

"I will go up stairs," Ethel gasped out as well as she could. "I would rather; I shall be better soon."

In the solitude of her own room, her door locked against intruders, all the sorrow—the long pent-up agony, burst forth in an uncontrollable fit of weeping.

Julia had remained much longer with her pupils than usual, and she did not arrive at home until just after their return. Her mother began instantly to tell her about Cyril.

"I know it all, mamma," she answered, in a voice of extreme sadness.

"Why, what on earth is the matter with you? are you going to cry yourself into fits, because your brother's going abroad?"

Julia turned her head away, but made no answer.

"Because if you are, you and Ethel had better shut yourselves up and cry together, for your company will not be desirable."

Julia walked to the door—

"Stay one moment; in your affection for your brother, you have not forgotten, I presume, that you have a sister. Has Ethel told you about poor dear Honoria?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Well, we have been to see the boy; have you no interest in your nephew?"

"Oh! yes, mamma, how is he? I heard when I came home to lunch you had gone to see him."

"He is very bad indeed; dying, I believe,—and to think his mother is not with him! I am at my wits' end. If I had money, I would go to Paris and try to

get her over here. How all this anxiety must spoil her beauty. I am sure I did it for the best, and I dare say she hates me now for urging her to it: I am sure I thought she would be very happy."

It was enough for Julia to find her mother distressed and worried, to make her forget all her own troubles; and, instead of going to her own room, as she intended, she stayed with her mother, and endeavoured to console her, and divert her attention from Honoria and her sorrows. And so the evening passed gloomily enough. Ethel did not come down again, and poor Julia was heartily glad when it was bed-time at last.

Between two and three in the morning, Cyril and Forrester walked up to the house.

"Well, good-bye, old fellow; shall I see you to-morrow?"

"After church," answered Cyril.

"Oh, church!—are you going to church? Ha, ha! pray for me. You'd better not go to bed; it is Sunday morning now—it will soon be time to go. Joking apart, though, come and breakfast with me, and we'll go together. Now, don't look so incredulous—I mean it. We'll go to Westminster Abbey and hear that glorious chanting—you'd better."

"Very well. Good night."

“ Good night. Breakfast at ten.”

And the young men parted.

Cyril slept heavily ; he had been drinking hard—the only refuge against thought, he said ; and when he awoke, it was with burning and throbbing temples, and a painful, dreary sense of entire hopelessness—entire wretchedness : the last day beneath the same roof with Her ! Oh ! was it true, all that Forrester had told him ? Should he see her, and accuse her of it, and hear her defence ? Folly ! Of course she would deny it. Besides, what object could Forrester have, to state so base a falsehood ? And yet no one was condemned without a hearing—no criminal ; why, then, should she, his once darling Ethel—Ethel, whose love for truth from a child had been so remarkable—why should she not be heard ? He rose eagerly, determined to see her now at once, before he went out : and if Forrester had belied her, if—oh, no ! such happiness was impossible—he dared not think of it ; and yet, with trembling earnestness, he began to dress. There *was* a hope—a faint one, it is true, but still a hope, better than the frightful gloom with which he awoke ; besides, it was right—just : it would make him happier ; for how should he feel, when the ocean parted them, if he had not the satisfaction, even though a miserable one, that

he had proved her false before he thus condemned? He is soon dressed and down stairs, and has sent the maid to say he would speak with her.

Oh, why has sleep—cruel sleep, that came not in the long hours of the night, sealed up so fast those poor aching, swollen eyes now?—why not have stayed away one little hour longer?

“Pray do not disturb her, Mary,” Julia whispers; “she has had no sleep all night. Tell Mr. Cyril the moment she wakes I will let her know his message.”

How impatiently he is waiting for her answer, pacing the room backwards and forwards, thinking how long the servant is gone! The door opens—he starts forward—not the servant, but Forrester!

“Well, you really are up; I scarcely expected it. You look surprised. To tell you the truth, you seemed a little “screwed” last night! I thought there might be occasion for soda-water, eh? before making your appearance to my sisters; and so I’ve come to see after you. How are you?”

“I have a wretched headache.”

“Ah! I thought so. Well, the fresh air will cure that; it is a lovely morning. Are you ready?”

“Yes, I am coming. I want just to give an order to one of the servants.”

He went out in the passage; the girl was just coming down stairs.

"Miss Ashworth is fast asleep, sir."

"Enough : it is too late.—Fast asleep !—She must care much that I leave England for years to-morrow, and that I have not spoken to her for days. If I needed further proof, is it not here ?"

A laugh,—that goading laugh which for years had held such sway over him,—rang in his ears.

He turned fiercely round ; he was in no mood for laughter :—

"What are you laughing at, for heaven's sake ?"

"My dear fellow," replied his friend, in his usual calm tone, "don't look so fierce ; it is impossible to help laughing at your absence of mind,—putting on a great-coat such a morning as this, and wrong side outwards."

Cyril dashed the coat on the ground, and said—

"Come, if you're coming. Would to heaven we were going this moment to leave England !"

They walked on in silence for some time, and then Forrester said—

"From the message I heard the servant deliver to you just now, I infer you sent word to Miss Ashworth you would see her. Now, take my advice once more, and have no interview with her ; it would

be worse than useless,—the fact that she was calmly sleeping pretty well proves the truth of my statement. However, putting that out of the question, an interview would be very painful to you. You cannot marry her now, were she true and faithful as you believed her. In this journey you may secure for yourself an income on which you could marry. Communication with your sister will always enable you to find out Ethel's movements; and you will learn if her fancy for others has passed, and whether there is hope for you. Let me come and dine with you to-day. Have no private interview with her whatever: wish her good-bye in presence of us all as calmly as you can, and then time will show whether you or I have rightly estimated her character."

And so it was settled; but there was no chance of wishing her good-bye in presence of them all; Ethel said she was too ill to come down, but she wrote him a few lines, a few touching lines, and asked Julia to take them to him.

"Cyril, I am very ill. What have I done that you should use me thus? I should so like to see you for a few moments. I have suffered so much these last few days. Julia will help me into the

dressings-room, if you will come there and see me. I cannot write. Do, do explain all this.

“ETHEL.”

Julia, who with her own sadness for Forrester's departure, still sympathised sincerely with Ethel, hoping it was only a misunderstanding which could easily be cleared up, gladly carried the note she hoped would set all to rights.

Forrester was alone in the drawing-room when she entered.

“Ah! Julia love, what have you there? you look important.”

“A note, dearest Gerard, for Cyril, from Ethel is he here?”

“No;—come here—I want you a moment. I think you had better not give that to Cyril; oblige me by not doing so.”

“But, Gerard dear, what am I to say to Ethel?—she is so unhappy. Oh! I must.”

“What? Julia, when I ask you not,—for Cyril's happiness, for Ethel's, if my wish is not enough,—do not give it him.”

“But she will ask me. What shall I say, dear Gerard?”

“Say you gave it to me to give him; for you could not find him at the moment, and do not talk

to Cyril on the subject. I have my reasons. Here, let me have it."

She gave it directly to him; he put it in his pocket, and then, throwing his arm round her, he told her he was glad of this opportunity of being alone with her—he had much to say to her: and long he talked to her in that low, winning voice, whilst she, her heart full to bursting, drank in eagerly each tone of that voice which would, to her, be silent for so long. They were shortly interrupted by the entrance of Cyril and his mother, and the instant announcement of dinner; and no other opportunity offering itself, Julia was obliged to content herself with a lingering pressure of the hand at parting with him whom she loved so devotedly.

But his silence during dinner and all the evening, satisfied her that he grieved as she did at their separation. And all that long evening Ethel was alone with a racking headache, and heartache still more agonizing. He came not in answer to her note, though she was ill,—so ill, and wretched. She could ask no more; she had only now to bear. Julia came up at last, and found her very ill and feverish. "Should she send for a doctor?"

"Oh! no. Did you give Cyril my note?"

"I gave it to Gerard Forrester to give him."

“ Why did you not give it him yourself, Julia ? ”

“ I could not find him just then, so—he took it,” faltered Julia.

Ethel's eyes were closed, or she would have seen the scarlet blush with which Julia uttered this prevarication.

“ Cyril is gone to bed now, at least, to his room ; ” she continued hurriedly.

A long sigh, and then a passionate burst of weeping, was all poor Ethel's answer.

That wretched night passed : wretched to both of them. More so to Julia, perhaps, than Ethel ; for her conscience continually reproached her during those tedious hours with wrong done, at Gerard's instigation, to that poor girl, who lay there moaning with pain, mental and physical. She tried to console herself by thinking—“ Gerard said it was for Cyril's happiness ; ” but the truthful monitor would have no such excuse. It was to please Gerard, not to make Cyril happy, that she had thus betrayed Ethel's trust. She could not sleep, could not lie down even ; but hoping, trying to make, as it were, reparation, she sat by Ethel's bedside, bathing and holding her throbbing head, till morning dawned ; and then, thoroughly exhausted, fell asleep with her head on Ethel's pillow. But a movement in the

house disturbed her, and she remembered that the travellers were going early, and she must make Cyril's breakfast and see him off; so she roused herself and began to dress quickly and quietly; for Ethel was at length sleeping from the effects of an opiate she had been obliged to apply to. She did not think she had been long dressing, but when she came down stairs, the sleepy-looking servant said Mr. Cyril was gone, and had left his love for her and his mother, and a letter for Miss Ashworth.

CHAPTER X.

"Slight are the outward signs of evil thought;
Within—within—'twas there the spirit wrought."

Byron.

SPRING has melted into summer—rich, golden summer, and a group of persons seem fully to be enjoying its beauty in the grounds of a large country-house: on a sloping and beautifully mown lawn they are assembled.

The party consists of a pale, delicate-looking girl, lying back in an arm-chair, propped up with cushions; a young, handsome man, with a plate of ripe, tempting-looking strawberries in his hand, standing by her; a lady, at some little distance,

working; and a young and very lovely girl, who is at high romps with a little boy, very much to the amusement of the lady aforesaid.

"Again, Aunt Maude—again," screams the child, as she jumps him from the ground.

"Oh! no more, dear Gerard; Auntie's tired. Let us play at something else."

"Well, *zen*, *do* in *ze* hay-field, and Gerry smother Auntie *wis* hay."

"Thank you," said his aunt, laughing; "I'm very much obliged to you. Well, come along—catch me;" and away she flew, the child after her, over the lawn—over the "haw-haw" which divided it from the meadow, and soon amongst the hay, rolling, both of them, with prolonged shouts of laughter, which would have made the saddest hearts laugh for sympathy. Yes, sweet Maude Forrester, with her gay and guileless heart, was a more favoured companion than any, of her merry little nephew. She seemed never tired of playing with him, and enjoyed the romps as much as the child. To bound about that lawn or over the fields, her long, soft hair flying out behind her like a stream of gold, the child following as fast as he could,—or to sit with him, when the heat made it really too much exertion to race about, in a large hammock, which was slung up between

two trees, to serve as a swing, and recount stories to her delighted auditor,—were more agreeable amusements than any town and its gaieties afforded her; and a few beseeching lines to Mrs. Stanley, her married sister, often claimed for her these delights: for she, like every one who knew her, could refuse Maude nothing. There was such a winning, coaxing tone in her voice—such an appealing, irresistible glance in her pretty eyes—and such a touching, disappointed expression if by accident she was refused, that Maude stood a very possible chance of being utterly spoilt; but she had a sweet temper and disposition, which stood the test of all this indulgence very well, but it rendered her very unfit for the world and its trials—very unfit to contend with the countless disappointments which fall, more or less, to the share of all.

Ethel—for it was she who was reclining in that chair—turned her mournful-looking eyes after the bright little creature who had passed them like a gleam of light, and said to her companion,—

“What a merry, happy girl Maude is!”

“Yes, she has wonderful spirits,” answered the young man; “and you, too, will be gay and cheerful when you are strong again, Miss Ashworth.”

Ethel sighed slightly.

"Oh, yes; indeed you will," he continued. "Not quite such perpetual motion as that same little beauty, because it is not your nature, I should think; but after recovering from illness our spirits are often higher than before: the very consciousness of living, walking, seeing the sun and flowers, feeling the pure air, all come to us with a freshness after the languor and inactivity of illness, which makes one gay whether we will or no. Indeed I prophesy you will reward my kind cousin's care, by letting her see many a smile, and hear many a merry laugh from you before you return home."

"I hope so," replied Ethel, "more for her sake than my own; for I feel sure it would be the best reward I can make her for her more than kindness. Do I not look better than when you called with dear Maude, and she insisted on my coming here?"

"You do, indeed, much. But now you promised me you would eat some of these strawberries; and I have gathered the very finest: will you try?"

"Certainly, after your trouble:" and she took the plate from him, and began to eat them.

"What are you two talking about?" said Mrs. Stanley, rising and approaching them.

"I am trying to persuade Miss Ashworth she will soon be as strong and merry as Maude."

Mrs. Stanley smiled, and held her hand to Ethel, who took it and pressed it affectionately.

"As strong, I hope, but not so riotous. Hark ! how she is screaming with laughter, and romping with my boy. I don't think Miss Ashworth knows how to make a noise."

"Miss Ashworth is an old sage woman before her time," answered Ethel ; and something very like tears glistened in her eyes. Her kind and watchful hostess noticed it immediately.

"Miss Ashworth has been out here quite long enough, and must go in and lie down a little before dinner ; and you, Philip, go to Maude, and just warn her that the first dinner-bell has rung, and that it is likely she will require more than the usual time allotted for dressing, after romping in that hay."

"Shall I help Miss Ashworth to the house first ?"

"No, thank you ; I can manage that. Come, dear ;" and offering her arm to Ethel, the ladies proceeded to the house, and Philip, springing over the "haw-haw," soon joined Maude and the boy.

Ethel had not risen from her bed for many weeks after Cyril's departure. His letter first made her aware that his cruel manner was occasioned by jealousy ; of whom, he did not say, nor could she guess, when her whole innocent heart had been his,

and she had never had a thought apart from him since her childhood.

She answered his letter sweetly, gently,—did not reproach him,—told him only that her unceasing prayer would ever be that he might learn how he had wronged her.

“ I cannot write again, Cyril, dear Cyril, till your mind is cleared from these doubts—this strange, this groundless jealousy ; but if you love me, if you ever loved me, in memory of that, in memory of our happy, guileless days of childhood, I conjure you, beware of your companion. I am very ill ; this may be the last letter I shall ever write, the last request I shall ever make you. Do not trust him, do not be guided by him in anything, I implore you. When you feel, if you ever do, sure that you have been mistaken, sure of that faithful love you now question, write to me, and be as sure, if she is living, of the forgiveness

“ Of yours, as ever,

“ ETHEL.”

She was very ill after this, so ill as to be obliged to have an attendant, for Julia's time was too much occupied to attend on her ; but her youth and

excellent constitution triumphed, and once more she got about again.

During her illness Ethel had suffered too much to notice it, but she now perceived a strange alteration in Julia's manner. She was cold, and distant, and repelling, and seemed to avoid her as much as possible, till at length she asked if she had offended her? but the only answer was, "Oh dear, no;" and so she pressed it no further, imagining that she had possibly taken up her brother's opinion, and considered Ethel had behaved ill to him, for she always avoided the subject of their estrangement, if Ethel alluded to it.

Gladly, therefore, had she accepted Maude Forrester's offer of accompanying her to her sister's; and the sweet fresh air, the kind attention, and the cheerful companions by whom she was surrounded, were daily having a salutary effect on her health, though her spirits were still depressed by Cyril's total silence.

He had written a few hurried lines once to his mother, and Forrester had sent a message through his sisters, to say they were in Paris, and had seen Honoria. These communications were all that had been received during their two months' absence. Forrester did not write to Julia, because that would have betrayed their engagement; and so this poor weak girl bore all the torture of uncertainty as to

his health, and safety, and continued affection for her, because she had not at once resisted his solicitations to place herself in such a position.

Oh! surely there is a heavy reckoning in store for those whose Influence over their fellow-creatures is misdirected,—who knowingly, willingly, lead into error the weak and yielding being who trusts to their guidance,—who, with a strong mind and clear understanding, cannot plead ignorance for their excuse,—who know good from evil, yet choose the wrong themselves, and drag another trembling soul into sin and misery with them.

He had made her promise to write, though he could not; and long letters, filled with all her passionate love, were constantly despatched to him, containing also some information which he had desired she would constantly transmit to him during the period of his absence.

We must now leave England for a while, and visit Paris—Paris broiling in the heat of a mid-day sun.

In a room in one of the largest hotels in the Rue Rivoli, Honoria is sitting, conversing with Forrester. She is in an elegant morning-dress, looking very lovely, but touchingly sad. It is a loose wrapping-gown, of a delicate muslin, the colour of a wood-



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butterfly,—a sort of bluish grey,—trimmed with Valenciennes lace. A cap of the same lace is fastened on her head by large coral and gold pins, her hair closely braided beneath. In her hand she holds a bouquet of choice flowers.

“How good of you to bring me these, Mr. Forrester! I love flowers, they are so beautiful and so passionless.”

“Do you think that latter quality makes them more to be admired?”

“More to be envied, Mr. Forrester. Oh! not to feel,—what would I give not to feel! If we must live, what a boon neither to feel nor to remember.”

“With less of suffering, we should have less of pleasure too; although I do not see why it should cause suffering: an habitual exercise of self-control, self-mastery, would prevent much mental distress. If I had a child, one of the points I should most enforce would be a mastery over its passions,—they should be our slaves, not we theirs; and by beginning early we could make every emotion entirely subject to our control. The one paramount one is love; but it was given us for our amusement, our pleasure, as those flowers are—why render it a torment? it only becomes so when it is not reciprocal, or the object is unworthy—why allow yourself to love under such

circumstances? it is quite possible to prevent it. I believe it is in the power of every one to obtain the heart they most covet,—provided always it is a free one; and when by assiduous, persevering, and well-directed attentions, you have succeeded in making the object of your admiration love you, you may then love with all the passion and intensity of your nature, and enjoy a state of blissful happiness the angels do not dream of.”

Honorina sighed and bent her head over the flowers. Forrester went on,—

“Life would be, indeed, a dreary monotony if we did not feel, if we did not know the ecstasy of awakening a corresponding feeling in another heart—know, by a sympathetic throbbing in our own, how it beats at our approach—see the eye brighten, the cheek glow. Oh! all this it is which alone makes life desirable.”

“But there have been cases, Mr. Forrester, where the love has been mutual, and yet there has been suffering.”

Honorina spoke this in a low voice, still with her eyes upon the flowers.

“You mean where the parties have met too late, where one or both are no longer free agents.” He paused, and then continued in a much lower voice,—

"Yes, slaves to the world, and the world's laws, must suffer then acutely, I admit. Happy for them then to have the self-mastery of which I spoke. And yet there would be a happiness in that forbidden love which would make him who possessed this power over himself even fail to exert it; so would he cherish the treasure he had found, and hug it secretly to his heart, though, like the Spartan wolf, it gnawed away his life. You are pale, faint, let me fetch you something—call your maid."

"Oh! no, no, it is—the flowers—the perfume is overpowering, and—and the heat."

He moved quietly from his seat, took the flowers from her hand, and opened one of the windows; then taking an essence bottle from the table, poured some eau-de-Cologne into his hand, and laid it on her forehead—she lying back in her chair, her eyes closed, looking deadly pale, like a beautiful statue; then he poured some in her hands, and the air from the window blew in on her face, and she opened her eyes and raised them to his—her glorious eyes!—and thanked him, and said she was much better; it was very silly, but she had not been well all the morning. And he recommended, in his sweet low voice, quiet and repose, and said he would go, because then she could go to her room and lie down. He should

have the pleasure of calling to see how she was in the morning; and he should keep Cyril away all day, that she might not be further fatigued; and so he took his leave. And she sat where he had left her some time, and then slowly rising, took the flowers from the table, and went to her own room. Her maid was there working.

"Mason, I feel ill—faint; undress me, I shall lie down till dinner."

"Yes, ma'am, you do look ill, indeed. Shall I put the flowers in water?"

"No, I like to—have them—to smell—"

"They will make you feel more faint, ma'am, I am afraid."

"They will, they will," she said, with a sudden energy. "Take them away out of my sight—out of the room. Never let me see them again." And throwing herself into a chair she burst into a flood of hysterical tears.

It was nothing new to Mason to see her mistress weep. She took the flowers from her out of the room, and returning immediately, stood silently by her for a moment or so, and then said, with something of authority,—

"Come, come, ma'am, this will not do, you have eaten nothing scarcely for several days, and this will

quite exhaust you. You must try, indeed, to get over it. Now, you are always so good and so brave," she continued, as the short hysterical sobs became more violent, "you never give way—come, come." And drawing her head towards her, she leant it against her, and began rubbing her swollen throat. By degrees the paroxysm subsided, and when she could speak she said—

"Thank you, Mason, you're very good ; that will do. I must try and eat to-day, and then I shall not be so silly. I dream so of my child, and that upsets me all day—makes me so weak and nervous. Do you think he has forgotten me, Mason? Do they let him say 'God bless mamma,' in his little prayers?" And again the tears gushed forth, but they were quiet, and so Mason let them flow, and as her eyes filled too with tears, she said—

"Of course they do, ma'am. Your own nurse—you may depend, she will never let him forget you. But let me undress you now ; and lie down until dinner, and then you will try to eat a little, will you not?"

"I will try, Mason, but everything seems to choke me."

Her maid undressed her, and she flung herself on the couch in her room, and remained there until her

husband's voice startled her, and she hurriedly rose to dress for dinner, as the plea of ill-health was never sufficient excuse for him to dispense with her appearance at the head of his table.

CHAPTER XI.

"The temper of heaven is true love, and that shows itself on earth in patience and forbearance."—*Man and his Motives.*

In a small, close house in the Brixton-road,—one of a row with little gardens before and behind them, some well-stocked with flowers and neatly kept, and others with shells and plaster-casts, a few gaudy plants growing up amongst them,—some utterly neglected, dank weeds and grass filling the borders and the walks, and clothes in the back-garden hanging to dry;—in such a row, and in one of the neatest houses, in a small front parlour, sits a man whose strange, melancholy eyes, and tall, gaunt figure, will make you easily recognise the tutor Graham.

He is not alone: on a couch with an inclined back lies a pale, delicate-looking woman, some crutches near her, telling the story of her pallor and her recumbent position. She is lame—lame from her birth—this only sister, and Graham loves her, as the

noble, affectionate heart always loves a dependent and helpless being. She had been a great charge to him : he loved her the more for that, and knew no happiness so great as waking a smile on those pale lips, or hearing from that low, weak voice the assurance that she was comfortable,—that she was happy. Happy!—in that little close room, always lame, always obliged to lie down, seeing no one but that gloomy-looking man,—there are some who, young, and strong, and healthful, will scarcely credit she was happy. But that same small room was full of associations—of the father, mother, she had lost, and of the brother, who, away in foreign climes, she loved and tenderly remembered : drawings of his, work of her mother's, books of her father's, were around her, and she loved that little room better than a palace. She had been always lame—she knew not the happiness of being otherwise ; and that gloomy-looking man had to her eyes a brighter and a dearer face than any in England. What would she have been without him?—who would have sacrificed everything for her as he had done?—who worked day and night to purchase comforts for her?—who borne her peevishness and restlessness so patiently?—who loved her in its highest sense as he had done?—and as she gazed in his face, while he sat studying, or

writing, or reading aloud to her, her heart bounded with gratitude that Heaven had blessed her with such a brother, and she was happy—undeniably happy. But she knew not all he had done for her ; and he hoped that the grave would close upon them both, and his secret be buried with him.

In a world so full of wickedness—so full of selfishness—it is pleasant and refreshing to pause and contemplate a character like Leonard Graham's, in which there is so much left of that Image in which man was created—so pleasant, that I will not apologise for dwelling on it at length, for going back some years in his life, and showing him to you as he was—showing you how his life, until now, had always been one long exercise of self-denial, self-control, of esteeming others better than himself, of humbleness, of faith, of Christian love to his fellow-men. He was the eldest of three children, brought up in a village near a country-town. As a child, Leonard showed the evidences of an ambitious and aspiring mind, and early evinced a taste and interest for travel, adventure, and daring exploits. But his brother, who was five years his senior, being a singularly beautiful child, shared the fate of most who possess this dangerous gift—he was spoiled. Every whim gratified,—every folly excused,—his brother and sister forced

to yield to him,—he grew up as selfish and exacting as such an education might be expected to make him; and when an influential friend offered to give one of the boys a fine appointment abroad, Leonard's eyes brightened, and his heart beat high with hope, only to receive his first cruel disappointment—to hear it presented to his brother. But he said nothing; his poor delicate mother exclaimed, ‘Thank God, her dear Percy was provided for before she died!’ and his little lame sister put her thin hand in his, and whispered, fondly, “She was glad *he* was not going.” And so he, too, was satisfied since those he so loved were; and he manfully tried to forget his disappointment.

His brother had scarcely set sail from England, when his mother died; and in a few months her husband was laid in the grave beside her. All Leonard's energies were now necessary to support the drooping spirits and failing health of his sister; and after their first grief was over, he spoke cheerfully and hopefully of their future,—of the wealth to be gained in London, where he meant immediately to remove, and assured her again and again nothing should induce him to leave her,—that where he went she should go,—that they would never be parted.

It was a great trial to them both to leave the village where they had passed so many happy years, and Leonard found it difficult to keep up his own spirits, more particularly as each day showed him how scanty were the means of support left them, and how difficult it would be to find employment in London ; but still, the great and bustling metropolis had charms for him, and he could not help hoping he should there have an opportunity to make use of his talents. He had received an excellent education from a college school in the town, and had done ample justice to his instructors, and felt sure that this would serve him.

A day or two before their departure, he was informed by a friend that an usher was needed at a school in an adjoining county, where an unusually good salary was offered, and that his influence would gain it. Full of dreams of London, he was about to refuse the offer, when an appealing glance from his sister decided him. He consented, and was soon engaged at Dr. Huddleston's. The day before they left their little dwelling, numbers of persons came to bid them good-bye, and amongst them Mary's dearest friend and companion, Blanche Maynard. They had been to school together, and the little, lame, timid Mary had been the peculiar

charge of the high-spirited, dauntless Blanche, winning the love of the sister, and, alas! for him, the brother's also. None on earth knew what it cost him, the daily intercourse with her, the constant listening to her praises from his sister; and then to look at that sister, and know that to secure his own happiness he must sacrifice her's—he must break the promise to keep her with him always: the struggle was a noble one he made—not even to betray, by look or gesture, his passion to its object, or to Mary. He had never known since childhood the gratification of one single hope, but this was hard to bear, and it paled his cheek, and took the lustre from his eye, the firmness from his step.

It was a sad parting between Blanche and her friend, and Leonard stood by watching them; and then she turned to him and held out her hand. She said nothing, only looked up at him: but such a look! He grasped her hand eagerly, murmured some indistinct words, and then she, snatching her hand away, was gone; but she had left that look graven on Leonard's heart.

You have heard of him at Dr. Huddlestons,—heard how the boys mocked and derided him, and laughed at his melancholy. What had he to make him otherwise? Every buoyant hope had

been chilled,—every ambition checked. He had descended to be an usher at a school! He had in all this one ray of comfort,—the love, the gratitude of his sister. He had taken a little lodging for her near him, and there each day after his arduous and unthankful task he would return, to be welcomed by a smile of grateful affection; and so he was content, if not happy.

He had been at Dr. Huddleston's some years, and they had heard but once of Blanche,—that once was to announce her marriage with a man of most unprincipled character, but handsome and fascinating. Blanche had no one to guide, to advise her; for she lived with an old uncle, to whom the charge was the greatest annoyance,—for he hated women,—and, glad to get rid of her, he cared not who she married. Her letter announcing it had been very hurried, and it was not at all evident that she loved this man,—at least she did not say she did,—and for a long time they did not hear again from her. Then came a letter, heart-breaking to those honest, affectionate beings who had so loved her. She had left her husband! unable longer to bear his conduct; and in consequence, her only child, a little girl, was taken from her. She concluded by asking them to find her a humble lodging near them, for she was friend-

less and wretched. This letter was more trying to Leonard than the last even; but, as ever, he concealed his distress from his sister, and consented, with his usual self-forgetfulness, to have Blanche near them again—to endure all he had borne before,—all the rousing of the passion which by so noble a struggle he had quelled. But he was spared this trial. Poor Blanche was taken very ill, and on her recovery, ordered abroad by her physician. Another long period elapsed, in which Mary had occasional letters from her: during which time Dr. Huddleston gave up his school, and Leonard determined to carry out his first project of going to London. There disappointment after disappointment met him, and he was compelled, after all, to be again a tutor, but this time a private one; and in the small cottage where I now describe him to you, he had been living some little time. * * * *

In Mary Graham's hand is a letter closely written, on foreign paper, with a black seal. It has caused a flush of pleasure to brighten her cheek, but it has made Leonard paler than his wont. He is watching her intently as her eyes eagerly scan it. And at length she holds it to him, saying—

“Dear Blanche! Read it out loud, Leonard, dear; I shall like to hear it again.”

He took it from her, paused for a moment, and then read it in a very steady voice.

“MY OWN DEAREST MARY,—It is three months to-day since I became a widow, and during that time I have heard but once from you. You have no news of my poor child,—no hope for me, I suppose, or I should have heard, I am sure. My health is now quite recovered, and my spirits much better ;—if I could only have my Adele, my darling child, I should be quite happy.——”

“She has my letter by this time, Leonard dear,” interrupted Mary, “has she not?”

“Yes, dear.”

“How pleased she will be ! but go on.”

“Quite happy !”—He sighed, and continued—

“I have made acquaintance here with a lady who interests me greatly,—a Mrs. Heathfield. Poor creature, our fates are too much alike : she has a husband whose usage of her is something frightful ; and, on pretence of its delicate health being too much for her, the man has sent her child away from her,—a little boy, the age, within a few months, of my Adele : is it not singular ? I go into her rooms constantly to sit with her, poor thing.—Tell your brother I have talked to her, as he has talked to me

in former happy days, of patience, of that endurance which conquers fate. How we can all preach! I could not be patient, I could not endure,—I wonder how I can expect her to be so; but it is right to talk to her so, is it not? How well I remember his sermonettes, (as I used then saucily to call them,) beneath the dear old walnut-tree in my uncle's garden, with you on your couch beside us; or by the stream where the willows used to dip their long feathery branches in the water, and the naughty way in which I used to splash him when I thought him too serious. And then, Mary, the bringing home the harvest,—the joy of being on the very top of one of those piled-up carts, and the fun of seeing Leonard's frightened face for fear I should roll over. Ah! those sweet days. You and he too have perhaps forgotten them; but in my wretchedness how I did treasure them! I have not forgotten a single day we passed together in that pretty village, nor a single piece of good advice which he ever gave me, little as, I fear, I have profited by it. Never does the smell of the sweet hay come to me, borne on the summer breeze, or the distant lowing of the cattle, or the quiet sound of a murmuring stream, but in thought I am again with you in our happy country home. I wonder if my child is like me,—

like what I was at her age,—as daring and as wild. I long so for your next letter; to know if your brother's kind exertions have proved successful, and she is to come to me. I cannot help fearing I must have missed a letter from you; that you sent it to Berne after I left, and that the stupid people have never forwarded it to me. Pray let me hear of you soon. I shall be here a week longer, unless any delightful news from you brings me over sooner. Direct, Hotel —, Rue Rivoli. What a volume I have written you! Adieu, my dear Mary.

“Your most affectionate

“BLANCHE.”

He closed the letter and was about to speak, when the door burst suddenly open, and a child about eight years old entered. Her little hands were full of flowers. She ran with them to Mary, and threw them in her lap.

“All for you—every one,” she said, holding up her face to be paid with a kiss.

“Good child,—thank you;” said Mary. “Now, go to Mr. Graham, he has something to tell you.”

“Have you?” she asked, running to him, and putting both her little hands in one of his.

He smoothed back the long glossy dark hair from

her forehead, and looked at her before he spoke, and then lifted her on his knee so tenderly, so gently, so respectfully, if I may so say, and still looking at her, very earnestly said—

“ We have had a letter from your mamma, my little girl, and she will very soon be here.”

“ My mamma ;—my very own mamma ! You are not cheating me ? ” and she raised her fine hazel eyes to his face.

“ No, Adele ; I have told you, we never mean ‘ to cheat you, ’ as you call it. I and my sister always tell you the truth. This letter is written by your mamma, and she says she shall be here in a week or less.”

“ I shall be glad,” said the child ; “ will she kiss me, as the lady does her little girl next door ; and as she used before she went away, after I was in bed ? I can remember that.”

“ She will ; she does love you as dearly as ever, and you must try and be a very good little girl to her, and a great comfort to her ; for she has had a great deal of trouble.”

“ Why did she leave me ? Grandmamma said it was because she did not love me, and that she was a wicked woman. Grandmamma was wicked to say that if it was a story.”

"Grandmamma made a mistake ; she did not know your dear mamma, or she would not have said so."

"You're good, and she's good," said the child, pointing to Mary ; "and so mamma must be good, or you would not love her ; so I shall love her. I never loved grandmamma ; and if you had not fetched me away I should have run away ; and I should have done like the princess did, gone to see mamma. I like that princess ; they said her mamma was wicked, but she did not care, she went to see her, and so would I."

"But, Adele," said Mary, "you did not know where your mamma was."

"No ;" she answered, jumping from Graham's knee and going to Mary's couch, "but I should have asked God to show me. I should have said, 'Pray God take me to my mamma ; you have told me to love my parents,—let me go to her and love and comfort her : ' and He would," she said earnestly, with her eyes bright as diamonds gazing into Mary's face. "Would He not ?"

"Yes, dear little girl, I believe so," was all Mary could answer.

Leonard had been quite silent whilst the child spoke, but he had watched her earnestly, never taking his eyes from her little graceful form, as she

stood by his sister's couch ; and when she ceased to speak he rose from his seat and went to her, and placed his large hands upon her shining hair, and then bent down and kissed her head, with the same sort of reverence he always used to her, as though she were a queen's child, and then left the room.

Adele Raymond, so was she called, had been with the Grahams nearly a week ; Leonard had rested not till he had traced her out and won her grandmother to consent to her return to her mother. She was a weak, silly old woman, and had been persuaded by her bad son that his poor wife was unfit to have the care of his little girl ; but she was as easily persuaded that he was wrong ; and as the child was a great trouble to her, she gladly resigned her to Leonard, whose eloquence on behalf of the poor mother moved the old woman to tears ; and she at once decided that on the following morning he should call for Adele and take her away. The child, who had no affection whatever for her grandmother, and a strong remembrance of the tender love of her mother, was delighted to go with any one who would take her to her ; and like a miser with some matchless jewel of countless price, did Graham carry away the child ; and, with a look of triumphant happiness

in his usually pale sweet countenance, presented her to his sister.

A day served to show them the wretched system of education which for the last two years had been pursued with the poor child. The silly old grandmother, and maiden daughter who lived with her, had acted with this little girl as too many unthinking persons do with children—invariably concealed from her the truth. If it was necessary that she should take medicine, they told her it was something very nice, and they were going to have some too; if they were going out and did not wish her to accompany them, they would tell her they were going to stay at home all day, and having engaged her attention in another room, slip out without her, and this unwise course they pursued on every occasion where it was likely that the truth would have been disagreeable. Brought up so differently by her mother, the child soon rebelled at this treatment, and at length, never believing them when they did speak the truth, gave them incessant trouble. Her spirit was as high and fearless as her mother's, and she feared no punishment they could inflict; and feeling for them neither respect nor affection, how could they hope to control or exercise any influence over her?

At first, therefore, she was a little troublesome to

the Grahams, at least to Mary, whose health made the exertion of constantly correcting her too much for her; but the child soon perceived she was with different people to those she had been lately accustomed to; and, treated with great kindness, perfect honesty, and most extreme firmness, she was beginning to love and appreciate her new friends. For Leonard the child possessed the most extraordinary interest,—to trace in her young face the expression and lineaments of her mother was alone a deep delight to him, and to think of the rapture with which that mother would clasp her child to her heart, and be indebted to him for it, afforded him more real joy than anything which had ever occurred to him. He was a strange fellow. That look which Blanche had given him at parting so many years ago he had never forgotten; and it had cheered and comforted him in hours of anxiety, been with him in solitude—by day, by night—ever since; it had told him that she loved him, and on that he had lived, because, judging her by himself, he believed that she would love on, clinging to the hope that one day they might be united—and then she married! But his love excused her even then; it was his fault; he had not told her that he loved her; her woman's pride was hurt. She would not encourage a passion

for a man who did not return it. She needed a protector; could he blame her that she had accepted one who professed to love her? So he tried to console himself, and excuse, her; and the only bitter feeling he ever entertained was against the man who ill-used the being he would have died to save from the simplest grief, and been proud to pass his life by her side even as her humblest servant. And now she was again free, and he could not help a faint hope lingering about his heart that that look would once more shine upon him which for so long had illumined his desolate life; that he should purchase it with the child; that after the first transport of joy she would lift her soft eyes to his as she had done before; that he should live to be again so blessed. With this impression Adele, as I have said, possessed an intense interest for him, and as he had loved Blanche, so in a measure he loved her child. How he longed for the tedious hours he passed with his pupils to be over, that he might return to his home and see Adele! Sometimes he would try to persuade himself she was not there, that he might the more enjoy the sight of the little figure standing at the door-way to welcome him.

And so nearly a fortnight passed away since she had first come to them, and one very warm evening,

when Mary, almost faint with the heat, had her couch drawn to the open window which her brother had had filled with flowers for her, and he was reading aloud, and the little girl seated at his feet, a cab stopped before the gate, and from it alighted a slight female figure in widow's weeds, who, giving directions to the driver to follow with her luggage, came quickly up the small garden. Graham started from his chair, and then recollecting himself, said gently to his sister—

“ Mary love, here is our visitor at last.”

“ What, mamma?” said the child. “ Oh, let me go to her.”

Mary burst into tears ; any excitement was too much for her. Graham did not notice it, but holding back the child said—

“ Let me go, my little girl, first, to prepare mamma ; it might upset her. Let me see how brave you can be, by being patient till I call you.”

And he hurried out of the room.

Mary held out her hand to the child, who took it and grasped it as though to aid her in her efforts to remain in the room. She would not have disobeyed Graham's commands for the world ; he had obtained the most perfect mastery over her. A second or two, although to the poor little girl and Mary it

seemed an hour, elapsed, and then the door opened, and on Graham's arm that pale young widow entered. Adele looked up at Graham, a look in answer satisfied her, and she flew to her mother's arms. He moved away, and came to his sister, while that long and passionate embrace lasted, and then Blanche, finding her voice at length, came forward to Mary, still holding fast her child, as though she feared again to lose her, and warmly and tenderly kissed and spoke to her friend and schoolfellow. How that evening passed they scarcely knew ; in mingled tears and laughter, in recalling olden times, in hearing all that had transpired since last they met, the hours went by, Adele, quite silent, listening to them with her arms tight round her mother's waist, and her head resting on her bosom.

CHAPTER XII.

"Alas ! they had been friends in youth,
But whisp'ring tongues can poison truth ;
And constancy lives in realms above ;
And life is thorny, and youth is vain,
And to be wrath with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain."—*Coleridge*.

It is still glorious weather, warm, glowing, sunny days, and sweet cool evenings, and Ethel is still an inmate at Crosby Hall, being petted into good health.

Mrs. Stanley is most kind and attentive, and Maude loves, and kisses, and amuses her; and Mr. Glanville is most anxious always to add to the general efforts which are devoted to Ethel's comfort. In the present state of her mind she could not have been amongst people more suited to restore its healthy tone. Mrs. Stanley was possessed of the soundest common sense, united to untiring cheerfulness and good humour. Without any strong feelings she had a kind heart which made it pleasurable to her to serve any one; but she had no idea of love-sick maidens, no belief in unalterable attachments, no sympathy with any one who indulged a fruitless grief about anything. She considered it a duty to make every effort to overcome sorrow of any description, and believed it to be quite possible.

Maude did not know what sorrow meant; and her joyous disposition, her wildness and gaiety, amused Ethel in spite of herself. Mr. Stanley was a plain matter-of-fact man, who went out after breakfast, and was never seen until dinner, when he talked about politics, the weather, and the crops; and Philip Glanville was a young man, and therefore, of course, no confidant for Ethel. Thus constantly amused, in pure air, in a lovely spot, with no one to talk with, and but little time to think of her

sorrow, Ethel began to regain strength and partial cheerfulness, although many times in the midst of some peal of laughter, at some frolic of Maude's, in which she could not help joining, the thought of Cyril and his desertion would come across her like a dark shadow, and she would turn away with a heavy sigh. One thing which occupied her thoughts, and at times distracted her from the contemplation of her sorrow, was the love of Philip Glanville for his wild and beautiful cousin Maude; it was constantly in her thoughts, because it seemed to her strange that he should love her, they were so very opposite; and she teased and perplexed him, and to all appearance laughed at his devotion. One day, Ethel, who, now strong enough to walk about without assistance, had been sauntering through the shrubberies, after some time returned to her seat, beneath the trees on the lawn, where she had left Philip and Maude; the latter, seated on the ground making dolls' clothes for her little niece, and Philip gazing at her as at some divinity. When she reached the spot Philip was alone.

He rose as she approached.

"Alone!" she said; "where is Maude?"

"She has been gone from here some time," he answered. "Are you tired?"

"I am, a little ; but I have been walking bravely ; it's a lovely day, is it not ?"

"Beautiful !—I shall be quite sorry to leave this place."

"Leave it !—Are you going ?" asked Ethel, somewhat eagerly.

"Yes, in a day or two ; I have had a long holiday,—you know I was here before you came."

"And I have been here nearly three weeks !" said Ethel, sighing.

"Yes, I think another three weeks will make you quite strong."

"Oh ! I do not think I must intrude on your cousin for so long. Here comes Maude ; how pretty she looks !"

He started, and musing something about having a letter to write, walked away in an opposite direction.

"Well, dear Ethel," she said, "are you tired ?"

"Just a little, Maude."

"Then you must sit quite still here, and rest ;—we'll have a long chat until luncheon. Where is that sulky fellow gone ?"

"Who do you call sulky ?"

"Why, Philip,—he is horribly sulky sometimes."

“ My dear Maude, I think that is a great libel,— he seems a sweet temper.”

“ One, two, three, — you’ve known him three weeks,—I, sixteen years. I don’t mean to tell you I can remember him quite all that time, but I mean to say, in few words, I know him better than you do.”

“ That I am quite ready to admit, but I must honestly confess to you that it would require a saint-like temper to bear your perversity and tantalisation, Miss Maude,—you do plague him sadly.”

“ Well, he plagues me,” she answered, blushing slightly; and then, throwing herself on the ground, and laying her beautiful face on Ethel’s lap, said, in that sweet childish manner she knew was irresistible,—“ Now, I’ll tell you all about it. When I was a little tiny hop-o’-my-thumb, I used to be always at Aunt Glanville’s; and Philip, who is ever so much older than I am, used to make a great fuss with me, and be always bringing me things; and then, they were all so silly, they used to tease him about me, and say we were to be married, and all that stuff: and now, you know, he thinks I am a little child still, and that all they said must come true.”

“ Well, dear; and why should it not?”

"Because I don't want to marry him," she answered quickly, lifting up her head suddenly, and looking at Ethel.

"Have you ever made him understand that?"

"No ; because he would make such a fuss : and, besides, I like him to be fond of me, and be always ready to do what I ask him, and all that. I don't want him to marry any one else, but I don't want to marry him myself. Why can't we go on just as we do?"

"That's very selfish reasoning, Maude dear. If you only love him as a cousin, you should tell him so, and persuade him to think of you in no other light, but to try and love some one else. It is a very hard case to wish him always to love you, and have no return."

"Well, perhaps it is ; but I don't fancy I should like to see him paying attention to any one else. I am very proud of him ; he is very handsome : and I dare say, if he'll only be patient and wait, I shall like to marry him when I am older ; but I am a great deal too young. Lor ! what a wife I should make ; I should be always forgetting I was married, and be flirting with every nice fellow I saw. Oh ! I know quite well I should ; it's no use your looking serious. And as to ordering dinner, and all that, I

don't know a leg of mutton from a round of beef. It's quite absurd! But he won't be patient; and when I tell him perhaps I'll marry him when I'm fifty, he really gets quite cross—oh! he can be cross, I can tell you. I would not stay with him just now, he was so cross. Oh! here he comes again—I shall go;" and, springing from the ground, she was soon flying across the lawn to the house.

Philip was the bearer of a letter for Ethel.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Glanville!—is this just come?" she said, taking it from him.

"Just been sent up from the village."

She never looked at it,—she was so tired of hoping a letter would arrive that she cared about; and so she put it into the pocket of her dress, meaning to read it when she went in to luncheon; for Philip had seated himself beside her, as though prepared to talk. Ethel liked talking to him, for he had a pleasant voice to listen to, and knew how to make the commonest remarks worth hearing. His manner was most particularly winning, to women especially,—so respectful, so gentle; and he had the good taste, too, to avoid all absurd compliments, which are so offensive to sensible women, and he never condescended to talk with those who were not.

"Where was Maude hurrying?" he asked.

"Running away from you, I fancy," said Ethel, smiling.

He laughed a little, short, nervous laugh that was habitual to him when anything affected him, and then said, his sister had had some letters, but that he had had none—his friends had forgotten him; and then asked her, was she, like other women, fond of having letters?

It was rather an unfortunate question, but she answered, with tolerable calmness, that she thought there was a degree of excitement about it that was agreeable, but that the contents were frequently disappointing.

"Like much that we look forward to in this world, Miss Ashworth, from the end of a novel, to things of much greater importance."

"Do you think the end of all novels disappointing?"

"Of most, I do,—those over which we have been intensely interested, where the heroine has 'come to grief,' in the most alarming manner, all through three volumes, and then she becomes happy in a matter-of-fact way at the end. I think that is very disappointing."

"How very cruel of you!" said Ethel, smiling; "do you not like to hear that her sufferings are terminated?"

"Yes; but by a tragic death, or something of that sort. After such unheard of miseries as some of these poor heroines endure, they ought, at least, to die by some equally unheard of means, and not do anything so common-place as marry, and be happy. Have you read this?" he asked, taking up a book which was lying on the grass beside them.

"I have begun it," said Ethel, rather hurriedly.

"I think it is very good, but the hero is very selfish. I don't like his character at all: the idea of suspecting that sweet, faithful Ida, and going away from her for years. Don't you think it is a little overdone, her being faithful to him all that time, through absence and positive neglect?"

"Women are capable of a great deal," answered Ethel, in a low voice.

"Yes, they are, I admit; but I think a girl with proper pride would have resented such unjust jealousy, not have borne it with such saint-like patience as Ida does."

Ethel made no reply; but, as though for some occupation, drew from her pocket the letter she had placed there. It was from Julia: she broke the seal, and could scarcely repress a cry when she recognised the handwriting of one enclosed as Cyril Haward's.

Philip had noticed the quick fading of the colour from her cheek, and saying he would go and try to find Maude, he walked away. Ethel scarcely perceived that he was gone, as with trembling hands she broke the seal of her letter and read the following:—

“Ethel, I can bear your silence no longer—why, why have you so cruelly deserted me? Tortured alternately by the thought that you are false, and then by the hope that you have been wronged, haunted by the memory of your sweet face, by the tenderness you have so often assumed to me, by the good counsel you have so often given me, I cannot believe you other than I had dreamed you were—the best and truest hearted of your sex; and yet how can I account for your total neglect of me? Is it pride that has kept you silent? Till now, I have clung to the hope that you would write to me one little line. You bore all my altered manner without notice until I left England,—let me go without one kind, one parting word, and never answered the letter in which I explained the cause of my alteration to you. Can you wonder that I have doubted your love? But, Ethel, it must be no longer doubt; it must be certainty: from yourself I will hear the truth, and if you have deserted me, then—but I will

not threaten—you know me, know my impetuous nature, my need for a good and gentle influence, such as yours was, to guide—to counsel me; think then what I shall be without this, and tremble if for a mere woman's caprice you have cast me off; for you will have wrecked my happiness here and hereafter. If you have ever loved me, write to me, I implore you. We leave Paris in a week for Seville; but you will not keep me so long in this agony of suspense; if you are alive you will write to me, I feel you will.

“Your devoted

“CYRIL.”

Again and again were those words read and re-read by poor Ethel, with the tears streaming from her eyes and falling on the paper, and then again and again pressed to her lips; and with a wild joy in her heart she flew into the house to write at once by that night's post, and reassure him of her love. She was comparatively happy, because she no longer thought him to blame; he had never had her letters, how could he help doubting? Forrester was the inhuman being who had come between their happiness, she now clearly saw, for to him had Julia entrusted the first note which had been written, and he must have suppressed it; by him also must Cyril have

been told that she was false. The motive of this cruel interference she could not fathom; but it was too evident that it was to Forrester she was indebted for all her late misery.

Full of the warmest affection was the letter she indited to Cyril in reply, containing as before a most urgent request to discontinue his intimacy with Forrester, and acquainting him with her suspicions respecting him, winding up with an entreaty for an immediate answer, in which she hoped he would assure her that this letter had restored his confidence in her. She had written, sealed, and sent it by one of the servants to the post, when Mrs. Stanley, first asking permission, entered her room—

“My dear Miss Ashworth, this is very naughty. No luncheon; did not they tell you it was ready?”

“Yes, but I have been so busy; I told Jane to say I did not want any; indeed I did not. I am quite well, quite strong now,—you must not be anxious.”

Mrs. Stanley did look distressed, and she answered in a tone of voice unlike her usual cheerful one—

“You must oblige me by taking this glass of wine and a biscuit, for I have something to say to you, and you must have some support first.”

“There is something the matter,” said Ethel, starting and seizing Mrs. Stanley’s hand.

"No, no, my love, nothing the matter; but I have had a letter, and I want to talk to you, that's all; take this, do—don't look so pale; every one you care for is quite well, indeed."

Ethel swallowed the wine she offered, and sat down; she was not so strong as she thought herself.

"I am frightening you unnecessarily, I see, and therefore I shall begin at once with what I have to say. I am going to advise you a little, like a friend, an elder sister; you must not be offended; if you had a mother or sister of your own I should not presume, but I have taken a very great interest in you. I have seen you since you have been here struggling against some mental sorrow, which has, I feel convinced, been the cause of your illness. You have struggled against it bravely; and though I should never intrude myself on your confidence, much of the facts have now come to my knowledge, and I want to talk to you:—you will not be offended?"

"No, indeed," said Ethel, with astonishment, for she had no notion what next was coming.

"Well, then, I have just received a long letter from abroad, and in it there is mention of my brother and some friend of his—in short, to make no mystery, Cyril Haward."

Ethel started again, and grew very red.

"I will not read you the letter, because it will distress you; but I must tell you that the accounts of that young man are such that I cannot help asking you if you are at all aware of them, and advising you, whether or no, at once to give up all idea of becoming the wife of such a person."

"What can you mean, Mrs. Stanley? I have known him for years."

"Very true, my dear; but he has chosen to make my brother his intimate companion. It may be strange to you to hear a sister speak so, but I am very honest. When I heard that Mr. Haward and Gerard were inseparable, I felt what would be the end of such an intimacy. My parents chose to spoil Gerard—yielded to his every whim, made him a tyrant at home, and with the most dangerously captivating manners, they have sent him forth into the world, to taint with his bad example all who trust themselves within his Influence. I speak warmly, harshly, you will think, perhaps; but you know not what I have suffered on his account. And sincerely do I regret that one in whom you are interested should have become his victim."

"What is said of—of—Cyril?" asked poor Ethel.
"I would rather hear all, if you please."

"I will read you, then, what my friend says," and opening a closely written letter she read this passage :—

"I wish I could give you good accounts of your brother, but I am sorry to say I hear nothing of him which will please you. He and a young friend of the name of Haward, I believe, are incessantly frequenting gambling-houses, losing large sums of money—and, in short, leading most discreditable lives. There is an exceedingly beautiful woman at an hotel in the Rue Rivoli, who is on bad terms with her husband, and there they pass a great deal of their time ; whether it is your brother or his friend who have taken a fancy to her, I cannot say ; but people are beginning to talk. My husband says Haward is much the worst of the two ; but you know Gerard was always a favourite of his, and he takes his part. I only know they are neither of them behaving creditably. I should be very sorry to have any *peculiar* interest in either of them. You know some girl who is attached to a Haward, do you not ?—is it the same man ?—if so, I pity her."

"Now this is exactly what she writes me. If you are the very sensible girl I think you, you will at once give up this young man."

Mrs. Stanley appeared waiting for a reply, and so

Ethel, summoning all her courage to speak calmly, for she hated making a scene, said—

“ I like to prove the truth of all I hear before I act upon it, Mrs. Stanley ; and when it is an accusation against any one it is common justice, I think, to do so.”

“ Quite right, my dear girl ; only let me urge you to endeavour to ascertain the truth. I do not think my friend would have so boldly asserted anything she was not prepared to prove ; but I have now warned you, I have therefore done what I consider my duty—I leave the rest to yourself ; only command me if I can serve you, and make this house your home as long as you like ;” and kissing Ethel’s pale and death-like cheek, she left the room, —left her alone to think, to read again his letter, which, but an hour ago, had made her so happy, and try to find a word which could contradict the dreadful story she had heard. No : it only confirmed it. Did he not say he should be lost without her influence—that to take from him her love would destroy him here and hereafter. What could she hope for one who clung only to another frail human being for safety against temptation ?—and yet, he loved her, in all the wretchedness of this moment : there was comfort in that. What might she not

achieve so long as he loved her!—should she write another letter and tell him what she had heard? No—it was better as it was; the touching words of affection she had sent him would awaken remorse sooner than accusation—they might arrest him in his course, might beget distrust and contempt for Forrester—might be in time to save him. Oh! how with clasped hands, and burning tears falling on them, did she pray it might.

CHAPTER XIII.

“And I knew that Innocence, with her garments still white, was passing away from the garden.”—*The Shadow of the Cross.*

IN Nurse Fenton's cottage, the sun, which is shining in at the little windows so gaily, seems to mock with its bright smiles the sorrowful faces of the inmates. Clustered together with little solemn looks of wonder, half mixed with fear, are Cicely's children, in the front parlour by themselves; in the room above, taken from his own small bed and laid in nurse's, is Ernest Heathfield, with half-shut eyes; he lays there panting for breath—one thin hand, parched with fever, extended on the counterpane, the other held in nurse's, who has sat beside him watching him day and night, with the devotion of a mother;

at the foot of the bed stands Cicely, tears trembling in her eyes as she gazes on the child, whose soul is struggling for its glorious release from that earthly coil which has bound it here too long.

"You are sure the letters went to the post, Cicely?" at length nurse whispers softly.

"Quite sure, mother."

"How strange they don't come nor send. Oh! his poor mamma—this can't last another day; if she does not come to-day she'll never see him on earth. Miss Ethel too, and Mrs. Haward—why don't they come?"

The child moved restlessly, and nurse rose and bathed his temples and his little hands, and raised him on his pillows, murmuring some gentle words of endearment to him: he smiled, as though she gave him ease, and turning his head on one side, fell asleep.

Cicely crept softly from the room, and nurse kept on her silent watch. A strange sight! that face on which Time's foot-prints were so visibly impressed, that wrinkled hand and snow-white hair, that bent and feeble form, sitting to watch the Angel of Death bear from its earthly tenement the spirit of the young child.

He had been sleeping some time when the sound

of wheels caught nurse's anxious ear. She so hoped some one who belonged to the child was come at last. She moved softly to the window and saw, alighting from a carriage, Mr. Heathfield, a lady, and a maid-servant. She could scarcely suppress a cry of joy. Fearful of having the poor boy suddenly awakened, she hurried from the room to prevent them from entering it; and was in time to receive them as they entered. Honoria flew to her and grasped her hand, but she could not speak.

"He is living yet, my dear," said nurse.

The old encouraging voice, she had not heard for so many years, acted like sunlight upon ice; and flinging her arms about poor nurse's neck, Honoria wept like a child.

"My love, my love, don't give way, pray," said her husband, assuming the pompous tone he considered right under a humble roof. "Sit down and recover yourself, while Mrs. Fenton gives us some account of the boy's illness. How long has he been ill, Mrs. Fenton?"

"Oh! dear me, sir; he's never been anything else, poor lamb!—run up and sit beside him, Cicely, in case he wakes;—but the day I wrote to you, ma'am," she said, dropping a curtsy to Honoria, "was the day he was took—for—took worse, sir."

“ Who have you had in attendance ? ”

“ A doctor who lives near, sir. You told me if I wrote you would send your physician : it's more than a week since I wrote last, and several times I have written and told you he got no better.”

Honorina started from her chair and looked at him—such a look !

“ I did not think it necessary to alarm Mrs. Heathfield,” he said, as though in answer to that reproachful glance ; “ but your last letter spoke of danger : that I attended to immediately by my presence and my wife's. Will our seeing the boy be injurious to him ? ”

“ I think not, sir,—he's too far gone for that.”

Honorina clasped her hands, in agony, and looked imploringly at nurse.

“ Shall we go up now, sir ? ”

“ Yes, I am quite ready.”

They followed nurse up-stairs : Honorina tottering rather than walking ; Heathfield following with a stately and consequential step.

They entered the small darkened room, and then those who might have watched him, would have seen that proud man shudder slightly as his eye fell on the form of the dying child.

Honorina, by a powerful effort, restrained a cry of

sorrow, and only sunk down on her knees by the bed-side, with her eyes fixed on the altered features of her boy.

A second passed, and then he moved uneasily, and murmured "Mamma." Honoria looked up hurriedly at nurse.

"Yes, speak to him, my dear, speak to him," she whispered.

"My boy, here is mamma," said Honoria, with such tenderness in her voice that those who had known her as Honoria Haward would never have believed her capable of using.

He opened his heavy eyes, and looked at her, smiled gently, and then drawing nearer to her, laid his face against hers—bending so fondly over him—and seemed to fall again asleep. Poor Honoria! with a look of ecstasy in her eyes, she folded her arms about him, and held him closely to her; and nurse, with her eyes swimming with tears, went silently and softly away; she felt the poor invalid had a better nurse than her now; and heartily she thanked God that the poor child's spirit would pass away cradled in his mother's arms.

The child remained motionless for some time, the father and mother watching him silently; and then, once more opening his eyes, he stretched out



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his limbs with a slight tremulous motion, smiled again so brightly that it seemed to illumine his pallid features, and then fell asleep to wake in the Better Land, with that smile still resting on his lips.

With a startled cry Honoria sprang from her knees, and pointed in speechless agony to the dead child. Heathfield started forward, and, throwing his arms round his wife, and gazing in her beautiful face, said in a voice of unaffected emotion—

“My poor girl!—be comforted. But it is awful!”

He had never witnessed death before ; it softened even him.

And nurse, whom that sad cry had summoned, found them thus.

The little tie which should have bound them to each other was gone,—the link was broken,—but in its rupture it reunited them ; in the sacred presence of Death they now stood, and felt that each must forgive their mutual wrongs. She, that he had neglected, ill-used her,—he, that she had married him without love, and broken her marriage vow as much as he had done : they felt this now, and it seemed to her as though a little messenger had flown to Heaven before them, to procure them mercy and

forgiveness ; and she clung closer to her husband, and, as a shower of refreshing tears rained from her eyes, she raised them to his face, and murmured, " Love me, Ernest, do ! " She felt so much her need of love, then, poor thing, and how little she had ever done to merit it from him or any one.

At length her husband and nurse tried to persuade her to be led away to another room ; and so after a long and passionate kiss on the cold lips of her boy, she consented : but she would not leave the cottage ; and he, still under the softening influence of the scene he had witnessed, consented she should remain, going himself to town to tell Mrs. Haward of their loss, and that they should remain at Haverley till after the funeral.

* * * * *

It was over ! the little form was laid in the earth, and the mourners had departed. Mother, do not weep ; thy child is in that land where there is " neither danger in the fields nor poison in the flowers." Do not think of him in that narrow grave ; but above, in the star-gemmed sky, know that he dwells, where there is rest, and joy, and peace,—where " the children are clad in raiment of dazzling whiteness," where " the tears are wiped from all eyes."

Early the next morning they started for London; and with the impression of the scene he had witnessed was the change it had effected in Heathfield passing away. Again he gave short, rude answers to Honoria's questions, and roughly rebuked her tears. As they neared town he, having been writing for some time in his pocket-book, said—

“I shall say at Copley Manor, Honoria.”

“You shall say what?” she asked, raising her face, stained with tears, to his.

“Why,” he answered, pettishly, “the death—to, put it in the paper. I shall say, at Copley Manor; I can't have it in the paper that my son died at such a place as Haverley.”

“Oh, Ernest! if it was good enough for him to live and die in,—if you were not ashamed to place him there,—why be ashamed to let the world know it?”

“I did not say I was ashamed; but it is my wish—whim, if you like—to have it like this;” and, unmindful of the fresh burst of tears it elicited, he read:—“On the 18th instant, at Copley Manor, Derby, aged 7, Ernest Stanley, the only and beloved child of Ernest Heathfield, Esq., M.P.”

Honoria wept in silence for some time, and then she said, “Why did not you have him buried at Copley, Ernest?”

"Because it would have been an absurd expense. Pray, now, do not let us talk any more about it; I am tired of the dismal."

"Oh, Ernest!" she said, laying her hand on his arm, "how I hoped that this mutual sorrow would have drawn us nearer to each other; for you were sorry to see him die. I want to be a good wife—I want to love you; why do you make it so difficult? I know that I have been often violent, and often irritating; that I have not tried to make you love me; that I ought not to have married you, Ernest, as I did. It was all wrong—we have both been wrong; and I might have been worse," she said, in a low voice; "but, for the memory of my little angel child, Ernest, let us try, for his sake, to do better for the future—at least, not to provoke each other, if we cannot love one another. We have both much to forgive: let us now, over the grave of our lost darling, be reunited, and keep our second vow better than our first."

It must have been a cold heart not to be moved by this touching appeal, with such a face to gaze on, too! More beautiful, far, than in her happier, brighter days did she now look, with the tears filling her lustrous eyes, and tenderness in every variation of her face. But he pushed her hand away, and bid

her not be sentimental ; if she could not be amusing, she had better be silent. She gave one long sigh, and leaning back in the carriage, spoke no more until they reached London.

He was only going through town on his road to his country-seat, and so he consented that she might, if she wished, go and visit her family, coarsely telling her that if they wanted money, they were not to ask him, for he had none to spare. I need not tell you how gladly Honoria seized the first moment to hurry to her mother's. The meeting was a most affecting one to all, and bitter were the self-upbraidings of her mother, as she looked at the worn and weary face, with its touching, sad expression, of her darling child.

In the same cover in which Julia had sent Ethel Cyril's letter, she had enclosed nurse's announcement of the child's dangerous state ; this, in her excitement, had not met Ethel's eye until the following morning, when she had, as soon as possible, started for town, intending to go to Haverley, requesting Mrs. Haward or Julia to accompany her. But by the time she reached them, Mrs. Heathfield had arrived with the information of the child's death. Ethel was, in consequence, at home to receive poor Honoria, and with her she had a long and confidential

conversation. There was something in Ethel's face and manner which gave the impression that she was to be trusted, and Honoria felt more inclined to talk to her than either Mrs. Haward or Julia. As soon, therefore, as they found themselves in the sanctuary of Ethel's own room alone, Honoria, in answer to Ethel's remark, that she was looking ill and harassed, said—

“Surely I have enough to make me so. The late sorrow alone has been enough; but before that—before that, Ethel. Oh! never be persuaded to marry a man you do not love—die first, Ethel,” she continued, more earnestly; “for love is in our nature—it must fix itself on some object; and then the misery! But for my poor child you would not have seen me here; goaded to desperation by my husband's usage, I had almost consented to leave him, Ethel,—to seek in another land that happiness and love which I know not of, but by name; but when the temptation was growing beyond my strength, and the honied words which spoke of so much bliss still rung in my ears—came the ‘means of escape,’ the letter which told me of my boy—my darling boy—dying. I hurried to England to him—my child, to catch his last breath. Yes, thank Heaven! in time for that, leaving, Ethel, my heart in

Paris, with the only being who ever had power to touch it."

"Honorina, dear!"

"I shock you, doubtless. No wonder; you are young, and pure, and good, and *untempted*. Ethel, remain as you are; beg your bread, starve, die, but never marry without love."

"But, Honorina," answered Ethel, soothingly, "you will exert yourself to fight against this. Away from the fascination, the presence of this person, you will overcome this feeling—you will try, dear?"

"I will make no promises. My husband might have saved me. Yesterday I spoke to him gently, almost tenderly, bid him, over our child's grave, renew our marriage vow, and keep it better; and he spurned me, Ethel. Oh, you do not know, you cannot even imagine what it is for month after month, year after year to pass away, and never hear a kind word, much less a loving one—to be neglected sometimes, and at others noticed only to be ill-used: and then, at length, to hear yourself addressed with tenderness, gentleness, and consideration,—be daily, hourly, reminded that there is some one on earth who lives to please you, to serve you, if need be, who sympathises with your sorrows, and strives to soothe, to alleviate them. Can you

wonder that it is impossible to help loving that person?"

"Finding it impossible, or deeming it so, should you not avoid this dangerous friendship, Honoria?"

"I knew you would say so. Of course, that is what is right, but who has ever done so, Ethel? No, no; a wrong beginning can have nothing but a wrong ending—we will not talk about it. I do not know why I mentioned it, but I trust you, and I like to talk to you. I like to hear your good, fresh, right-minded answers, and respect them, though I may not follow them. I have no one on earth to care for now, or who cares for me—what matters it what I do?"

"Do not talk so wildly, dear Honoria. Remember that the fashion of this earth passes away, that there is another and a brighter home prepared for those who endure 'to the end.' Do not,—oh, do not, for a few short fleeting hours of happiness here, risk all hope of a glorious hereafter! Young as I am, I am not without my troubles. I have suffered much lately; but the knowledge that faith and resignation will be rewarded, supports me, and I pray for those daily."

Poor child!" said Honoria. "I, in my selfishness, never noticed your thin pale face. You

have been in trouble. What is it? Cyril's absence?"

At the mention of his name the blood rushed to Ethel's temples, and faded as rapidly.

"I ought to have told you that I saw him a day or two before I left Paris, and that he is quite well. Why are you so silent, and crying too, Ethel dear? Is there some misunderstanding between you? Never mind; lovers' quarrels are soon made up,—they are only April showers, which make the sun shine all the brighter."

"It is no quarrel, dear. We had better not talk about it—and yet! oh, yes; perhaps you can tell me, and you will tell me the truth. Is it true, that he is leading a shameful life in Paris—gambling, Honoria, and a constant visitor at the house of some beautiful woman?"

Honoria smiled at her, and patted her cheek playfully, as she answered—

"Silly child. You should have put that first. So she is a little jealous, eh! Never listen to reports, my dear; when Cyril neglects you, then believe that he loves another."

"But you do not know all, Honoria. He left England, deeming me false to him, and neither wrote to me nor wished me even good-bye. Twice I wrote to

him and received no answer—till the other day, and I had scarcely time to realise the happiness of having a letter from him, when it was all destroyed by this intelligence. Have you seen him often?”

“Not very often, dear Ethel, certainly. But what was the name of this beauty?—did they tell you that?”

“No; only that she lived in the Rue Rivoli. He and Mr. Forrester, it was said, were always there.”

It was now Honoria's turn to colour, and even her throat was crimson as Ethel spoke, but she answered calmly—

“Then dismiss your fears, my dear girl, for I must be the beauty they talk of.”

“Indeed! Oh, I am so glad,” replied Ethel, too much excited by her own subject to notice Honoria's emotion.

“But the gambling, dear? Oh! perhaps the whole accusation he could explain. Dear Cyril! I was sure they must have wronged him.”

“Why, what a changed face, Ethel! You must love him. He is a lucky fellow to be so loved, and I hope he will deserve it. Hark! there is some one knocking. Come in.”

It was a servant to announce Mr. Graham.

“Where is he, Mary?”

"In the sitting-room, Miss."

"Is any one with him?"

"No, Miss."

"I will come directly. Will you stay here, Honoria dear?"

"Oh, yes, I'd rather; but I ought to go, ask mamma to come up here; and you, kiss me, for I may be gone before you are at liberty."

"When shall I see you again?"

"*I do not know*, Ethel. God bless you."

She kissed her tenderly; and when she reached the door called her back again, and again embraced her. Ethel hurried down stairs, but then, and long after, she thought of those words and fancied they had a strange meaning.

CHAPTER XIV.

"The only way of rightly influencing other minds is to put ourselves in sympathy with them."—*Man and his Motives*.

In the drawing-room Ethel found Graham standing gazing out of the window. He turned as she entered, and in his nervous, timid way, took the hand she offered him.

"I dare say you are astonished to see me, Miss Ashworth; but you were kind enough to say I might call. I have been unable to manage it till now. Cyril is absent?"

"Yes; he has been abroad some months," she answered, in a low voice.

"With Mr. Forrester?" and Graham looked searchingly at her.

"Yes," she replied in the same tone. There was a sort of awkward pause, neither of them seeming to know how to continue the conversation; at length he said—

"My principal object in coming here to-day, was to ask you if you would speak to Miss Haward for me about a friend of—of my sister's, a widow lady, she has one little girl, and wishes so much to find a clever and amiable young person who would undertake the charge of her; it occurred to me that Miss Haward, if she was not too much occupied, would undertake the education of the child. She is very clever, but requires a little management; however, she is at the same time so engaging, that I do not think Miss Haward would find it an irksome task."

"Oh! I think Julia will, readily, for I know she has just left her last pupils,—they are too old to require her longer; I will be sure to mention it."

"Thank you; then I will call again in a day or two. Has Mrs. Haward heard from her son lately?"

"No, not very lately."

"Can you tell if he is in Paris still?"

"Yes, I believe so."

Again he paused, as though about to say something, and could not muster courage or find words to convey his meaning; and then rising hurriedly from his seat he wished her good morning, and repeating that he would call again in a day or two, took his leave.

Ethel wondering a little at his manner, but thinking it was nervousness which made him awkward, gave no further consideration to it; but went to see if Julia was returned, to communicate his requests to her. Since Ethel's return from the country Julia had evinced more of her former kindness and friendliness to her than of late; it seemed so against her own gentle nature to harbour angry feelings against any one, and it was difficult too, to resist Ethel's unvarying efforts to restore their accustomed affectionate intercourse.

Ethel met her now on the stairs, and taking her into the sitting-room told her Graham's errand. Julia was very well contented to take the child, and glad, she said, to get something to do, for she was

beginning to be anxious now the Forresters had no longer occasion for her. At the mention of their name Ethel's thoughts flew of course to Cyril, and she told Julia what she had heard from Mrs. Stanley.

"I should not have told you had I believed it true; but Honoria has made me so happy, by assuring me that it was to her they came so constantly, and she seems to have no belief in the story at all."

As she spoke Cyril's name, Julia's manner returned to the same freezing coldness which it had before exhibited; but as Ethel continued her story, and said that he, and Forrester, were continually at Honoria's, her face changed colour slightly, and she gave an almost imperceptible start, and quickly changing the conversation left no opportunity to return to it whilst she and Ethel were alone, and before Mrs. Haward Ethel never mentioned Cyril, for whether to annoy her, or for some reason she could not divine, it always elicited some ill-natured remark.

In a few days from this time, Julia was duly installed as resident governess at Mrs. Raymond's. Mrs. Haward complained very much of this arrangement, as she invariably did of all new ones, whether for her own benefit or that of others; but as Mrs. Raymond was most decided in her determination to

have the governess she engaged for her little girl, resident in the house, and as Julia, much fascinated by her and her child, seemed most anxious to go, it was at length decided on.

It was no pleasing prospect for poor Ethel to be left the sole companion of the querulous, fretful Mrs. Haward; but feeling that it was far more agreeable for Julia, whose life had always been one of shade rather than sunshine, she would not for worlds have dropped a word, which could in any way hinder, the accomplishment of her wishes.

Cheerfully, therefore, she set about helping Julia in her preparations for departure, and endeavoured to ward from her the continual ill-natured remarks her mother kept indulging in.

There was something peculiarly amiable in the way these two young girls bore with Mrs. Hayward's most irritating temper. Julia's disposition was so calm and temperate, that in her it was less wonderful than in the more excitable, more deeply feeling Ethel. Julia possessed so little self-esteem it was evident in her every action, and more than all, in her unquestioning obedience to Forrester, through which she had permitted herself to be placed in her present painful position. She bore, therefore, uncomplainingly, patiently, all her mother's unkind

and unjust speeches, because she was too humble, too diffident to think them undeserved, and because—I admit, another very strong reason—she loved her mother very much, notwithstanding how little she deserved it.

The sweetness with which Ethel bore with them possessed more merit, inasmuch as it annoyed her very much; she did feel that she did not merit unkindness; but at the same time she considered that the bitter disappointments under which the once rich and beautiful Mrs. Haward was smarting, was excuse enough for her now peevish temper, and that to soothe and amuse her was more in accordance with that charity “which suffereth long and is kind,” than sharp and indignant rejoinders, which at times she felt almost inclined to give. It was, therefore, a most excellent exercise of her own temper, being thus constantly exposed to Mrs. Haward’s, and in this light she endeavoured to regard it. The night before Julia’s departure, when the boxes stood packed in the little bed-room, and the books and ornaments which belonged to Julia had left blank places where once they had stood, and all gave token of separation, of that painful “leaving home,” Julia looked round with eyes half-dimmed with tears, for many sad thoughts were crowding on

her. She turned to Ethel, whose fingers were still at that late hour employed rapidly in her service, and laying her hand on her shoulder said,—

“Thank you, dear Ethel, very much ; how kind you have been ! I hope one day you will be as happy as you deserve. Although—I cannot understand it—I wish—” then she only stopped and kissed her very warmly, without making an end to these disjointed sentences.

Ethel looked up and smiled.

“What were you going to say, dear Julia ?”

“Something I ought not, Ethel, so do not ask me ; let us go to bed now, I am very weary,—to-morrow I shall be alone.”

“Yes, but not far from us, dear Julia, that is one comfort. I shall very often—every day if I can—come and take a walk with you and your pupil.”

“Do, that will be very nice. I hope you won’t be very dull.”

“Oh, no ; I shall miss you very much, of course, but I shall endeavour by constant employment to pass the time ; and Maude Forrester gave me a most pressing invitation to come and see her often—very often.”

Julia sighed and turned away. Perhaps she would rather Ethel had expressed more sorrow ;

though it was with the best possible motive she spoke thus cheerfully.

Early the next morning Julia departed; and several long, tedious days poor Ethel had passed with Mrs. Haward, when she asked her permission to go and see the Forresters, for she heard Maude had returned.

"Oh, yes, pray go; I'd rather you left me alone than stayed with me against your will."

Obliged to be content with this ungracious permission, for she was unlikely to obtain any other, Ethel departed, and was fortunate in finding Maude at home.

"Oh! you nice dear darling, Ethel, I am so very glad to see you. Now you are going to stop all day."

"No, dear Maude, not all day, but some hours. You know Mrs. Haward is alone."

"Well, she won't hurt for once, I'm sure. Oh, do stay, I want to tell you so many things; and Philip is coming, too, to dinner, and he will be so pleased to see you. You have no idea what a fuss he made about you. You are such a favourite of his. Do stop. Oh, I see, I know you will. If you won't, I shall go into my own room and cry all the afternoon. Now *do*."

"You are such a terrible coaxing little thing."

But really I must go home first, and tell Mrs. Haward I am not going to dine with her."

"No, no ; then she'll keep you. Sit down," she said, with a sort of childish petulance, as she pushed her into a chair, "I shall send our maid, and just tell Mrs. Haward I would not let you come away."

"But what will your mamma say?"

"Miss Ashworth, I am delighted to see you," she answered, drawing up her slight figure, and imitating admirably her mother's voice and manner. "Papa will say 'How do you do, ma'am?' with a short nod ; Lizzy will give you two fingers, and say 'Good morning,' which she always does till after dinner, though we don't dine until eight ; and Maude will throw her arms round your neck, and kiss you like this,"—and suiting the action to the words, she kissed Ethel most heartily. "There, now, I have bent your bonnet all manner of ways ; so come and take it off."

"Well, first, what say you to go into the Park to meet Julia?"

"Miss Haward—my dear Miss Haward—oh ! I should like it excessively. Have you seen her since she was in her new situation?"

"No. I had a little note from her, and she said she was very comfortable, and liked her new home

as well as she could in so short a time ; but we shall hear more, if we see her to-day."

"It will be charming ! but I must go and ask mamma if we may have the brougham ; she does not like us to walk in London without Gerard or papa. I won't be long."

She was soon back, with her mother's permission to take the carriage ; and they drove to the Park, Maude amusing Ethel the whole way with her curious and original remarks on all subjects, especially upon the people they passed. Arrived at the Park, they alighted ; and after walking some time by the Serpentine, met Julia and her little charge. When the first salutations were over, Julia whispered to Ethel—

"This child is very quick and intelligent, be careful what you say."

Guided by this hint, the conversation was for some time very general, and then Maude said—

"We had a long letter from Gerard the day before yesterday."

This was intelligence which interested both her companions excessively, and they both started and changed colour. Ethel found voice to ask if he was well, and when he meant to return.

"As to his return, he is very mysterious about

that ; but he is very well. He says your brother, Miss Haward, is going on the 15th to Seville. Oh ! that's to-day."

Julia looked hard at Ethel ; but she turned and spoke to the child, who was standing close to the water, watching a mimic boat dancing on its tiny waves.

It was strange the perfect control these girls had over their feelings,—the effect again of early education. Mrs. Haward's shallowness and cold-heartedness had always prevented them from outwardly expressing feeling, as she had never sympathised with them, and always ridiculed what she called a scene. This might have had a prejudicial effect on them, but it had fortunately only habituated them to bear with as much outward calmness as possible any agitating event. But the extreme of Mrs. Haward's system is even more likely to produce most injurious consequences to the young who are exposed to it. Sympathy too warmly expressed for slight misfortunes, and the beauty of tears, and feeling, and tender hearts too much enlarged upon, sends forth into the world women of such tender sensibility, that at moments when they are expected to act and be useful, to shine in their character of "ministering angels," they are incapable of doing

anything but fainting or weeping, and giving an immense amount of unnecessary trouble to those who have not such delicate nerves.

Maude, too giddy and thoughtless to notice that her information had caused any agitation to the girls if it had even been more apparent, continued chattering about her brother and his letter.

"Such a strange letter," she said: "all in short sentences; and not seeming to know where he was going, or what he was going to do next. At any rate, he is not going to Seville with Mr. Haward. I say he is coming home, but mamma does not think so."

How little she thought the pleasure she was giving both her friends. Each felt a throb of joy as she uttered these last sentences,—Julia that he her idol was coming home, and Ethel, that he was about to withdraw himself and his baneful influence from Cyril,—but they only made some common-place remark in reply; and then the conversation returned into mere chit-chat, until Julia said she must go home: and so, with a warm pressure of her hand, and assurance that their pleasant walk should soon be repeated, the friends parted.

How differently were the thoughts of the girls occupied! Julia, in her deep absorbing love,—the

more absorbing because she never spoke of it to any one,—was thinking, with an almost painful feeling of delight, that she should see this idolized being soon again—hear that musical voice breathing again words which it was too much joy to think of—that she might again give utterance to that love, which in silence was almost too much to bear. Ethel, with a calm and tranquil feeling of satisfaction which had not gladdened her for very long, was thinking that her letter was gone to Cyril at the moment when it would be most likely to be useful to him, when there was no counteracting Influence to destroy its effect—that alone, with her letter only, would come back to him the memory of the bright hours they had passed together, and save him perhaps before it was too late. And Maude,—why was she silent? where had her thoughts flown? To a moustached man she had just seen, whom she thought wonderfully handsome; and she was contrasting him with her cousin Philip.

Ethel had been alone in Maude's room for some little time just before dinner, when Maude rushed in, exclaiming—

“My dear, my dear, what do you think? Philip's come, and brought with him a man I saw in the Park. Such a fellow! so divinely handsome, you can't think. Do make haste and come down. Oh!

I forgot; my hair is as rough as rough: I must have Watman. I won't change my dress, because of you, —there's consideration and unselfishness, handsome man and all too!"

"Pray do not mind me," said Ethel, laughing: "if you and your mamma will excuse my dining in a high dress, I very much prefer it."

"Of course. We don't mind men. If we had ladies coming, we might think it necessary to dress. Lizzy always does; but I very seldom do, it is such a bore."

"Are you ready for me, Miss?" asked a voice outside the door.

"Yes, ready and waiting. Come in, Watman: didn't I ring?"

"No, Miss."

"Oh! well, I meant to do so; it's all the same.—No, no, I'm not going to change my dress."

"Miss Forrester has, Miss."

"Well, I do not mean to do so, then. Do my hair *beautifully*," she said, laying great stress on the word.

"You must have your dress off to have your hair done, Miss."

"Oh! Watman, you are the most perfect nuisance,—you're always long and dawdling when

I'm in a dreadful hurry ;—there, will that do ?” And, pulling off her dress, she threw over her shoulders a white dressing-gown ; and, taking the combs and pins out of her hair, shook it in all its silky luxuriance over her face and neck.

It was soon arranged by the skilful hands of her maid ; and now the trouble of taking off her dress was over, she felt very much inclined to put on a more becoming one ; and after a great deal of indecision, which caused her maid and Ethel to remind her she was in a hurry, she settled on wearing a high white muslin : and they only reached the drawing-room in time to be handed down to dinner ; but, very much to Maude's annoyance, the “divinely handsome” man fell to the share of her sister Lizzy, which caused her to torment more than usual her unhappy cousin Philip, who had of course offered her his arm.

The dinner was a very fine one, for even when alone Mr. Forrester was most particular about his table ; and Ethel, cheered by the ray of hope respecting Cyril, really enjoyed herself very much, for she sat between Mr. Glanville, and Maude's admiration, who turned out to be an officer in the Guards, with a few good anecdotes which he exerted himself, in the course of dinner, to tell, and which

were really amusing. In the evening Ethel watched with much sorrow the annoyance Maude was occasioning her cousin, by her most determined flirtation with the handsome officer ; indeed, it appeared, on her side at least, something more than flirtation ; for her cheek was flushed, and her manner hurried and excited, without that light-hearted gaiety which was her chief characteristic. He was evidently as much struck by her beauty as she was with his, for, from the moment of his arrival in the drawing-room after dinner, he never left her. Philip made a great effort not to appear annoyed, but it was plain to Ethel how much he felt it, by his silence, and the way in which he turned over books, scarcely looking at the prints they contained ; but they seemed to serve him as an excuse for not talking. At length he rose suddenly, and crossing the room, asked Maude to sing. She refused, and making her no answer, he returned to his seat near Ethel.

“Do you sing, Miss Ashworth?”

“Yes, a little.”

“Will you?” he asked, eagerly.

“Willingly, if it is thought worth listening to.”

“The kindness with which you consent will ensure that.”

She smiled, and going unaffectedly to the piano,

sang with most perfect taste and firm enunciation, a very touching Irish ballad.

She was perfectly unprepared for the effect it produced ; seldom, if ever, going out, she had had no opportunity of displaying this talent ; no one had ever heard her but the Hawards, and it had never been praised by them ; but to those now listening to her, it gave real pleasure. Satiated by Italian and German, this simple ballad had a freshness and novelty to them in itself charming, and they were loud in their admiration. Of course she sang again and again ; and when she left at night, Philip Glanville thanked her warmly for the pleasure she had afforded him, "for you have sung me into good humour, and for that alone I am your debtor." After all the kindness she had received, the bright and elegant house she had left, her return to the dark, small room, and Mrs. Haward very cross at having been left, was not pleasant ; but she hurried to bed, and was soon sleeping and dreaming of Cyril.

CHAPTER XV.

"'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall."—*Measure for Measure.*

It is a cold and windy evening in August, unusually so for the season. Those farmers whose crops are still standing, have gone in and out uneasily all day, complaining sadly that the rough wind is blowing out the corn, and that it will ruin all their hopes of a fine harvest, and are now, as the evening draws in, sitting sulkily by the kitchen fire, smoking and grumbling alternately, as the gusts of wind rattle the casements and roar down the old wide chimney. Some have betaken themselves to the village ale-house, to chat with some neighbours, and receive their sympathy in their present anxiety. It is a pretty, old, rambling road-side inn,—such as once might be found in every village, but which are now displaced by railway hotels, where there is frequently less comfort and more to pay for it. Under the influence of strong beer, or strong grog, the farmers' spirits have arisen, and they are drowning the noise of the wind with song and laughter. Their

principal amusement is occasioned by a man who is either half fool or all knave,—the latter it was generally supposed ; but he made a living by pretending the former ; and many a good meal and good coin was bestowed on Bob Rakes, sometimes for pity, but more often as payment for the fun he occasioned.

By some means he was aware of everything which happened in the domestic life of each inhabitant of the village. Many were the family secrets known by Bob ; some of which he concealed to suit his own purpose, and others he told to elicit roars of laughter from his auditors. He was always to be found at the forge or the ale-house, where he always collected a certain number of listeners, and never came away without a handful of coins. He was seated now on the table in the large, old-fashioned, sanded parlour where the guests were assembled, for Bob was admitted everywhere ; a large tankard was beside him which he frequently carried to his lips, seeming heartily to enjoy its contents.

“ You seem to like it, Bob,” said one of the farmers, as Bob took another long draught from the tankard.

“ Yes,” he answered, with a broad grin ; “ more than thee didst like thy wife’s box o’ th’ ear last noight.”

A loud laugh, of course, followed this speech from all but the farmer himself, who made some angry remark which he might just as well have left alone; for Bob's wits appeared to wander more than ever whenever any one attempted to reprimand him; and in the most irritating manner, he persisted in laughing, as though some excellent joke was intended. The noisy mirth which his words had excited had scarcely subsided, when a new comer entered the parlour, ordering, as he did so, some bitter ale and a ham sandwich. He threw himself into the first vacant chair, and looked with apparent discontent at the other occupants of the room.

"Rough evening, sir," at length said one of the men.

"Rather," was the concise reply, in no very courteous tone, though the voice which uttered it was singularly melodious.

Finding him unwilling to talk, the party continued their own conversation without reference to him; but Bob, knowing him to be a stranger, could not easily forget his presence, but continued eyeing him for some time, and shortly after left the room.

The gentleman, for such he seemed, ate the slight repast he had ordered quickly, and when he had

finished, demanded of the man who sat nearest to him, how far it was to Copley Manor.

"Well, sir,—I can't exactly say ; but a matter of two mile, I dare say. What do you think, Tom?"

"Copley Manor?—as good a three as ever you walked, man, by the road : there's a way by Cupper's mill, across the fields, makes it about two, may be, or less, perhaps."

"Across the fields," said the gentleman, thoughtfully ; "humph : in which direction?"

"Why, sir, as straight before this inn door as you can go ; there's a stile right opposite, you crosses that, and keeps on along the foot-path till you comes to a small bridge ; then there be two paths, and the right-hand 'un is yours."

"Why, what are you talking on, Tom?" said the other man ; "right-hand 'un leads to Bates' farm."

"No such a thing : it brings you on to his land ; but arn t there a path through his corn-fields as takes you into the lane?"

"Never mind, never mind, my good friends, I shall find it, I dare say : good night to you ;" and walking from the room, after plying his reckoning, and wrapping himself in a kind of large boat cloak, he went out into the night.

It was still blowing roughly, and a small drizzling

rain was falling; but the moon was at her full, so that even the misty clouds did not succeed in making the night very dark. In the porch over the inn door, on one of its rustic seats, sat Bob Rakes; he did not speak as the stranger passed him; but watched him as long as the faint light gave him a glimpse of his tall, dark figure; and then with a low laugh went back into the cheerful parlour.

Copley Manor was a fine old English mansion, which had stood in the storms of many a rough winter, and the sun of many a golden summer, since the days of the rigid Puritans. It was said that the Protector himself had once dwelt beneath its roof, and planted with his own hand a walnut-tree in the park, whose age required a prop to spare it from utter destruction; when the rough blasts shook it, till even its knotted roots could scarce keep their hold of the earth, deep as they had planted themselves. A small lodge, through which the daylight could scarce enter for the roses which covered it, stood at the park gates, about a mile from the house, the road so winding that, until you were close upon it, the house could not be seen; and then the sudden effect of its velvet lawn, and exquisitely cultivated pleasure-grounds, was as pleasing as startling, after the wild luxuriance of the park. Lovely as the

place unquestionably was, it possessed no charms for its possessors. Heathfield cared for it only so far as it was *his*, and others admired and coveted it; otherwise he thought of it only as a place to sleep, and eat, and drink in, which did as well as any other; and that the land belonging to it brought him so much a-year from the crops in the fields, and the timber in the park. For him the flowers bloomed, the lake with the white star-like water-lilies gleaming on its waters, murmured its sweet music in vain; the old noble trees, beneath whose shade so many generations had lingered, had no charms for him; they were trees—nothing more. Nature spoke no language that he understood; in the gentle whispering of the breeze, or the babbling of the brooks, he heard not the “voice of the great Creator;” but walked through his beautiful domain with far less pleasure than the dogs, who, bounding on before him, rolled themselves in the long soft grass, barking with delight. For Honoria the place had no charms either, for every flower and every shrub was painfully associated with harsh words and cruel neglect,—with her first arrival there, and the agony of mind she had there endured. Many a place there may be on which we have gazed with admiration, and thought how enviable the possessors were, when, had we known the secrets of their

domestic life, we should have found that they were as little really to be envied as Honoria and her husband. On the stormy evening which I have mentioned, Honoria sat alone in a small drawing-room, looking out on the lawn. The blind was not drawn down, although it had grown too dark for any employment. She sat in a low chair near the window, gazing up at the wild sky—at the pale watery moon over which the clouds scudded, watching the rough wind shaking the petals from the flowers, and bending the trees till their branches cracked, and their leaves fell to the ground in showers. Her husband had gone out early with a few things in a portmanteau, and said he should not be home for a day or two: he seldom condescended to say where he was going. And all that long stormy day she had been alone with her sad thoughts. The few words which Ethel had spoken to her of a future state, had occurred to her often since; but her ideas of religion were all confused and uncertain. She had some vague notions often, connected with it; but no comfort, no hope, no looking forward to another and a better life after the troubles of this, no lifting up of her soul in penitence and prayer, which would have brought that rich consolation, nothing in this world else, can purchase.

She had been alone, as I have said, long. Mason had been in and out to look at her, to persuade her once to eat, then to ask if she should send into the town (a mile off) for some books; but the answer was always—"No, Mason, I shall do very well," rather petulantly, as though the intrusion was troublesome: and so Mason had not disturbed her again, even to close the shutters.

As the evening wore on, the storm seemed to increase in fury, and the rain beat pitilessly against the window. Still Honoria sat there as quietly as though she was gazing out on some sweet, serene summer's night. At length she was startled by the sudden appearance of a figure on the lawn, but a short distance from the window. She started from her chair, retreating a few paces, yet still with her eyes fixed upon the object, which now remained motionless where she had first seen it. She was about to ring or call for help, when her breathing and power of motion seemed suspended by its gradual approach to the window: her heart beat till she could hear its pulsations. It was a tall man wrapped in a cloak. What should she do? What object, but a bad one, could have brought him there on such a night? For a second, which seemed an age, he stood close to the window,—she with her eyes painfully fixed upon

him, and her tongue glued to her mouth, as it were, with terror. Then he raised his hand to the window, turned the handle, and opened it; and the moon, passing from behind a cloud, revealed, ere Honoria's screams could startle the household, the features of Gerard Forrester!

"I have frightened you," he murmured gently, "forgive me. I thought of nothing but seeing you, and forgot that my sudden appearance might alarm you. Sit down: don't tremble." And he led her to a chair, and stood beside her, whilst she endeavoured to recover herself. At length she said, in a low voice—

"Why have you come here?"

"Why, Honoria! Can you ask why?"

"It is folly, madness," she continued, more earnestly; "and you must go this moment."

"I shall be here but a short time. Do not dismiss me yet, I implore you," he said, in a low melancholy voice. "I knew that you were alone—that he was out—and determined that I would risk all, and see you once again, for the last time. My intention is to leave England for ever. I have returned to it now to arrange some affairs, and in the hope of seeing you once again. I only landed the night before last, and to-morrow I depart. I shall not go home. I



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have lost interest and affection for every one—but one, and from henceforth I shall be a wanderer on the earth, bearing with me the intolerable burden of a hopeless, unrequited love.”

She looked up at him, and gave a slight convulsive start; but he went on, as though he did not perceive it.

“I do not blame you; but had I thought it unrequited, I would never have revealed it. Your manner, your gentleness—tenderness I may almost say—the seeming flush of joy with which you greeted my appearance, the confidence you reposed in me,—all, all deceived me, and I lived in an elysium, from which our last interview in Paris too roughly tore me. But that is over. I come not to complain of my own sorrows and sufferings, but to bid you eternally adieu. If it be any comfort to you to know there is one being on earth who would die to serve you, of that you may be assured. Now I will relieve you of my presence.”

He rose from his chair, still with his eyes riveted on her, as they had been from the beginning,—on her intensely pallid face, with the scalding drops falling on her cheeks, on her hands convulsively pressed together, on the hysterical heaving of her chest—all he had watched minutely. He paused a

moment ; she still remained in the same posture ; and then he spoke in a voice as though interrupted with tears :—

“ You—you—will not let me go for ever, without something belonging to you to treasure, however trifling,—your glove, handkerchief. Honoria, we shall never meet again on earth ; for pity’s sake, one word of kindness, and some little gift, to speak to me of you in my exile.”

Still that motionless, pallid face, with the quick, tremulous twitching of the eye-lids. He held his hand out to her, bent over her, and spoke again her name in his sweet, melodious voice.

Honoria, trust not your own strength. Quick, quick,—one silent aspiration to Heaven for help. She seized his extended hand. With redoubled tenderness he spoke her name—

“ Honoria, my Honoria ! ”

Silent all : the very wind seemed hushed ; the moonlight streamed into the room. She cast a hurried glance around, and then rose suddenly from her chair. Something fell on the ground : he picked it up and gave it to her—and wild shrieks of hysteric laughter burst on the still night.

When Mason and the terrified domestics rushed into the room, they found their mistress senseless on

the ground alone, with her child's miniature tightly grasped in her hand.

With looks of wonder, they carried her to her room, and some of them were most anxious to send for a physician; but Mason, who understood her mistress well, desired them not to do so till she recovered from her faint, but to go away and leave her with her. But long she watched ere returning animation brought back the colour to her pallid lips and face: at length she opened her eyes, and, finding the kind face of her devoted servant leaning over her, she threw her arms round her neck, and wept a shower of refreshing tears.

"What is the matter, Mason? I have had a horrid dream, have I not?"

"I dare say you have, ma'am," said her maid, soothingly; "but don't think any more about it. Let me undress you and put you into bed, and I will stay in your room to-night."

Passively she submitted herself to be undressed, but no sleep visited her eyes that night, though she lay so tranquilly that Mason, who watched beside her, thought she was sleeping.

The morning was a still and bright one after the storm, and, to Mason's surprise, Honoria rose early, made no allusion to her indisposition of the night

before, and was so gentle and calm, so changed, that Mason could scarcely believe she was the same restless, impetuous being of the day before. What thoughts had visited her in that long, sleepless night no one ever knew; but from that time Honoria was changed: nothing annoyed her, but nothing, by the same rule, seemed to amuse or interest her. When her husband returned, she received him with the same calmness; and even he noticed the change.

At the dawn of the morning after the scene I have related, a noble vessel was standing out to sea; each spar of the rigging was distinctly visible against the bright, clear sky. The heavy rain which had fallen had beaten down the sea, and the ship moved gracefully, and with but little motion, over the waters. There were many passengers on board, and the faces of most spoke of sorrow and anxiety—told of partings with dear friends, of the severing of old ties and associations, of disappointed hopes, and all the many troubles of this chequered life: a few looked bright and happy, as though they had all they loved with them, and their voyage was but a pleasure trip, from which they should return with renewed zest to their English home. From the expression of almost all the persons assembled on deck, you might have

traced what the "spirit wrought" within, save one. It was that of a tall, dark man, who, apart from every one, leant over the vessel's side, and gazed into the deep waters. The face, though a very handsome one, bore so many mingled expressions, that to say by what particular feeling the mind was at that moment swayed would have been impossible. Certainly, nothing of happiness mingled with his thoughts: there might be traced disappointment, recklessness, passion, pride, anger, and many other evil feelings, but none of the gentler ones which are the better tenants of the human heart. He remained, until the vessel was some miles on its way, leaning, as I have said, over the side; and then, going down to his cabin, he took out his writing-case, and sorted from his papers the copy of a letter which, for the development of my story, I shall now transmit to you:—

"MY DEAREST JULIA,—I have thought unceasingly of our interview, and all that you said; and as I am now fully persuaded that there can be no further happiness for either of us, our wisest plan is at once to end the semblance of a love we cannot feel. We have mistaken our feelings, Julia: our long friendship has given us a warm interest and affection for

each other; but it is not love—not that love which would make wedded life happy. My eyes have been gradually opening to this, and I was finally awakened to the fact at our last meeting. I think we can neither of us feel sufficiently grateful for the chance which threw us together, and so released you from a lingering engagement, which could only end in unhappiness. I am leaving England for an uncertain period—I may never return. I shall hope to hear that you are happy in some more suitable engagement; for, believe me, the brotherly affection I entertain for you can end only with my life.

“Yours affectionately,

“GERARD FORRESTER.”

He read this over twice with a strange smile, and then replacing it in his case, took out some paper and employed himself busily in writing.

And Julia, what did she feel on the receipt of this letter? About the same time that he was perusing the copy, she held in her hand these cruel lines, scarcely able to believe the evidence of her own senses; and when, a few moments after, Mrs. Raymond entered the room, the changed expression of the poor girl's face was so alarming that she would have sent for medical assistance, had not

Julia, through her passionate weeping, told her the cause of her present distress ; for Mrs. Raymond's kindness had won for her Julia's love and confidence, and she scrupled not now to tell her all her grief. She explained to her, that on the previous day she had met Forrester in the street : his sudden appearance almost made her faint, but her delight at seeing him, a few words from him soon dispelled—for he was cold and distant in his manner, and told her that if she really cared for him, she must consent to a private marriage at once, as he intended leaving England immediately ;—of course, she endeavoured to convince him of the impossibility and impropriety of this ; but his only reply was, that to love nothing was impossible, and that the impropriety he could not see :—that they had parted with nothing finally settled, and that she had this moment received the letter, which she gave Mrs. Raymond to read. Of course, there was but one argument to use—that such a man was unworthy of her love or regret ; but that brought no consolation to the almost heart-broken girl. The love on which she had lived so long,—the happy dream which had so pleasingly occupied her thoughts in many a solitary moment, and cheered her through her toil, must now be cast aside ; the romance of her life was gone, nothing

remained but its dull and stern reality. It was some days ere she could resume her accustomed employment ; but Mrs. Raymond rather urged it upon her, as she considered it was so much better for her than idly to dwell upon her sorrow : for when engaged with Adele, it was impossible to think of anything else, she required such undivided attention ; her extraordinary intelligence and indomitable spirit made her a strange and interesting character, young as she was ; and though, for some reasons, Mrs. Raymond would have preferred a person of greater energy and activity than Julia, she was glad of her extreme gentleness, hoping it might better counteract the errors in her darling's disposition.

Often a burst of passion was quelled by Julia's gentle remonstrance, which would have been aggravated by her mother, whose temper was too much like her child's. But although Julia had acquired a very considerable amount of power over Adele, no one could manage her like Graham ; and a threat of telling him of any naughtiness always ensured better behaviour. Poor Graham ! On him a new life seemed to have dawned ; he could now see each day, if he wished it, the being whom he loved still, better than life : and he had served her ! To him she was indebted for the happiness she now ex-

perienced, and this satisfied him. She was grateful, she thanked him often earnestly, in accents which made his heart beat and throb audibly ; and though that meaning glance, she had once given him, had not beamed on him again, yet he was content. It was better so perhaps, for still he had his poor sister to support,—Blanche, her child ; and so they were not rich enough to marry even if she loved him : and then he would put his hand to his head, as such a thought shot through his brain, as though to know she loved him would drive him mad.

A few days—which seemed ages to Julia—had passed since the receipt of Forrester's letter, when a new cause of sorrow awaited her. It became Mrs. Raymond's painful task to communicate to the poor girl the sudden death of her mother. So far as such an awful event could, it occurred at a fortunate moment, for Julia was so stunned by the previous trial, that this seemed to affect her far less than it otherwise would ; and Mrs. Raymond's most kind arrangement to take Ethel into her house to live with her, in the same way as she had done with Mrs. Haward, was a great comfort to her. Ethel gladly consented, and considered herself most fortunate in obtaining so desirable a home, to which she moved immediately after the funeral. She did not

pretend to sorrow for the unfortunate woman, but she was deeply shocked at the event; and being still very delicate, it made her so ill as to require much care and attention, which Julia, with her accustomed unselfish disregard to her own sufferings, most willingly accorded her. She had bound Mrs. Raymond to secrecy respecting Forrester, and Ethel deemed that her depression was entirely induced by her mother's death, and, of course, made no remark about it. But as soon as she herself was sufficiently recovered, she persuaded Mrs. Raymond to allow her to attend to Adele, whilst Julia went somewhere into the country for change of air.

Mrs. Raymond readily consented; but where—was the important question—should she go? Ethel proposed Mrs. Stanley's; but Julia, with an almost imperceptible shudder, objected to that. Nurse then was mentioned—and this would probably have been agreed to—when a letter from Honoria decided the matter. It was in answer to the one informing her of her loss, and in it she begged Julia might come down and stay some time with her, as it would benefit her sister, and be of infinite comfort to her. Delightedly Julia consented to go, and in a few days the unconscious rivals were clasped in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Talk not of wasted affection, affection never was wasted;
If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters returning
Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment."
Longfellow.

ETHEL was very soon at home with Blanche Raymond, and, since Cyril's absence, had never been so happy, for in her she found a companion perfectly suited to her taste, joyous-hearted, high-spirited, and clever; she had always a fund of conversation, and with an hour or two in the morning given to the child, the days passed away so fast, that a week was gone before Ethel considered she had been in her new home a day or two.

They were sitting one evening by the open window, while Adele was playing with her doll in the small garden which fronted the house. Both had been silent for some time, occupied with their own thoughts, when Blanche suddenly asked Ethel if Julia had written to announce her mother's death to her brother.

"I did," answered Ethel, in a low tone.

"Poor young man!" said Blanche. "I often used to see him in Paris; and hear of him."

"You used?" said Ethel, eagerly.

"Yes, I lived near the hotel where he and his friend, Mr. Forrester, were. I never knew till Miss Haward came to me, that Mrs. Heathfield was his sister. I got very intimate with her, poor thing. Well, do you know, it was very odd, but I always thought of Haward and Forrester—and I cannot tell you why—as Faust and Mephistopheles; from the first moment I saw them, this idea crossed me, and I have since heard it singularly confirmed."

"Which is the Faust?" asked Ethel, with an attempt at a smile.

"Oh! Haward, poor fellow; I hope there is no Margaret," she added, with emphasis.

"I have heard before," Ethel summoned courage to say, "that Cyril was following too much the advice and example of Forrester; but do you not think that a "Margaret" might save him—would have greater influence over him than his friend?"

"Yes, if he were constantly exposed to that. You must know I form a quick and seldom an erroneous estimate of character, and my opinion of Haward is that he is painfully weak, and ready to take any one's opinion or advice rather than his own; but at the same time very affectionate, capable of a very enduring affection, so long as the object was not

removed from him ; but absence and a contrary influence would be very injurious to him. Am I right ?”

“ I fear you are,” murmured Ethel.

“ Those who loved him should never have allowed him to leave England, with that man particularly.”

“ Those who loved him could not help it,” said Ethel, in the same tone.

“ Well, it is a sad thing, and it would be a glorious triumph to snatch him from the grasp of that odious man. A girl who loved him very much—and a very brave girl, who had plenty of constancy, courage, and perseverance, might save him, although her own future happiness might be risked in the attempt. For what can a girl expect, wedded for life to a man of weak principles ? poor thing, her only consolation would be the knowledge that she had secured his happiness, and unselfishly forgotten her own. That is rather romantic, though, Ethel, is it not ? better to marry some good, common-place, jog-trotting fellow, whom you did not particularly care about, and therefore for whom you felt no particular anxiety ; don’t you think so ?” she said, laughing.

“ No, Mrs. Raymond ; I think it better not to marry at all, than marry without love ; I have seen the misery of that.”

Blanche sighed, and said—

“Perhaps you’re right ; after all, single blessedness is the happiest state. My darling child,—I often lay awake at night and think of her, and what will become of her. I almost hope that she will never marry,—for it is such a lottery,—but live upon the little I shall leave her, in some quiet country village, such as my birth-place was.”

Almost as she spoke, the child came in, and throwing back her long, soft, silky hair from her flushed face, hot with playing, she drew a stool to her mother’s side, and sat down beside her.

“Well, little darling,” asked her mother, “are you tired?”

“Yes, mamma ; I wish I had little girls to play with,—I am tired of playing by myself.”

“I dare say you are, love. Why Adele,” she said, suddenly, “what have you done with your buttons?—you have lost two ; I have told you, now, to be so careful of them ; they are real gold. What have you done with them?—do go and look in the garden.”

“They are not there, mamma,” said the child, as her face grew even redder than before.

“Then where are they?”

“Lost, mamma.”

"Adele, I don't think you are telling me the truth; and if you are not I am very angry with you; so I beg you will go out of the room, and not come to me until I call you, unless you will immediately say what you have done with them."

The child rose, and without a single tear, although her little throat seemed bursting with sobs, she walked out of the room.

"Did you ever see anything like that child's spirit?" said Blanche; "I can scarcely keep my temper when she is so determined."

"There is certainly some mystery," answered Ethel, smiling; "I don't think she has lost them."

"Then she should not tell me a story. I am more anxious about truth than anything; and those terrible people she was with almost made her deceitful. Mr. Graham did all he could to prevent that, but he warned me she would require great care in that particular."

It was a fruitful topic—her child: and Blanche talked of it long, till Ethel's thoughts wandered back to their first conversation; and she would have given worlds to draw her back to it, and learn all that she knew of Cyril; but there was no hope of that now, for Blanche asked her to go and see

after Adele, and try if she could persuade her to give the history of the buttons.

Ethel found her in her own little bedroom with her doll in her lap, whose rosy lips she occasionally kissed. The same half-indignant, half-sorrowful expression was still on her face ; but she looked up when Ethel entered, and smiled a little.

"Well, my dear child," said Ethel, very kindly, going to her and kissing her, "I want you to tell me a little story—you know I often tell you one—I want to know all about the buttons."

The smile with which the child had greeted her faded quickly, and she answered very decidedly—

"I cannot."

"Do you really mean that they are lost?"

"I cannot tell you anything," was her reply, still more decidedly.

"But that is silly, dear Adele ; you do not like to vex poor mamma, do you ? and she is very vexed ; if you will not tell me, come down and tell her."

"She said I was not to tell, and she's very unjust—very unjust," and the poor child burst into tears. Ethel stood by her for a few moments, and then said—

"I shall leave you alone a little longer, dear

Adele; and I shall then hope to find that this temper has passed away, and that you can come down and kiss mamma, and explain all this away." And so she did leave her; but her bed-time drew near and Adele never came down.

"Well, I shall go to her and kiss her," said Blanche; "I cannot bear her to go to bed without that; and, perhaps, after a night's rest she will have recovered her temper, and will tell me the truth. I shall say no more about it to-night."

She went, therefore, to her room, kissed her affectionately and bid her be sure to say her prayers; and the child sobbing bitterly, kissed her, too, but made no offer of confession about the missing buttons.

We talk of childish griefs as slight and not worth the weeping for, but there is as much bitterness in the tears they shed over their sorrows, as those which fall in their riper years. The withdrawal of the smile from the face they love, or the absence of the accustomed fond words,—the wounded pride which disgrace causes,—all these are deeply felt by a little child, and in proportion with the brightness of the light through which they view things in their happy moments, is the gloom which shadows everything in their moments of sorrow; and sincerely Ethel felt for Adele as she stood by her bedside,

when she retired to rest, and saw the swollen eyelids, with the tears still wet on her cheek, which told how the poor little girl had cried herself to sleep ; and, with a sigh, Ethel thought that even childhood had its troubles, but that only to weep over them was like a child.

And Ethel sat down beside the little bed, for she was not inclined to sleep, and thought over and over again of Cyril, and all that Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Stanley had said to her : recalled their childish days, when she lay like Adele in her little cot in the nursery, with dear old nurse beside her, and of Forrester's boyish attentions to her, and Cyril's love, and then of their older love and their wretched parting, till her very heart seemed bursting, and her head aching. And then commending herself to God, begging Him to direct and guide her, and to protect and restore Cyril to her, she went to bed and slept at last.

The next morning, as though in answer to her prayers, she received two long letters from Cyril, and the feeling with which she read his passionate expressions of restored love and confidence in her, are easier far to imagine than describe. The first was written in answer to the one she wrote at Mrs. Stanley's, but through some accident had been

delayed, and the other was the reply to her announcement of his mother's death. On that subject he spoke less feelingly than she could wish, but he said his absorbing love for her prevented him from feeling almost anything else. And like a loving girl, she was willing to believe him and excuse him.

Yet, notwithstanding the first delight with which she read his letters, there came over her as there had done before, a strange sensation that he was not "her Cyril," as she used to say in her childish days. He was changed; there was a tone of recklessness, desperation—she knew not what to term it—but something which was unlike the simple, single-hearted Cyril she had so long loved. Again, he spoke as he had done in his last letter of needing her influence, her love, to protect him—he did not say from what—but that without it he should be lost. And this pained her. Oh! what would she have given to see him and talk with him. He told her, too, so little of what he was doing—merely that he was going to Seville, and that he thought he should get on there; but in his second letter he did say Forrester had left him, and that she was glad to hear. Lost in a world of thought, of mingled sensations, she was so long before she came down, that Mrs. Raymond knocked at her door to know if she were ill; so she was

obliged hastily to put away her letters, and come down to breakfast. Adele was in the parlour, and seemed quite to have recovered her usual spirits, for her mother had made no allusion to the night before, as she trusted the child would of herself tell her the truth ; but finding she did not, she called her to her after breakfast, and was just going to talk to her on the subject, when a woman came up the garden, at sight of whom the child started, and began—

“ Oh ! there is ”—and then, growing very red, stopped confusedly.

In a moment or two the servant announced to Mrs. Raymond, that a person wished to speak to her who would not give her name, as the lady did not know her. She went to her immediately, and was instantly assailed with a volume of Irish eloquence from the woman standing in the hall.

“ Ah, ma’am dear, it’s ashamed I am to trouble ye, but I’ve niver slept the night, through the darlint young lady. May the blessing of God rest on her young head, and His providence protect her now and iver ; for would not she have given me and mine a meal—which, barrin’ a drop of tay, we haven’t tasted for days—with stripping the illigant buttons off her ; and I took ’em, my lady—bad ’cess to me—for they dazzled me eyes with their glittering light,.

and I saw food for my starving childer in 'em. And I got home holding 'em fast, and in the mane-while some good Christian—may the Lord bless him!—had given mate and bread enough for me and the childers' supper: so thinks I, the gould buttons will be breakfast and dinner for to-morrow and many a day; I'll not sell 'em the night. So I laid me down, thinking I'd sleep till the morning; but no—no sleep came to me—for iver and iver I heard a voice saying—'Biddy, Biddy, you've gone through a dale of throuble, and I've held you up; would you go now to break my laws and stale? for what is it but staling, taking the jewels from the child that knows not their value? Would her mother like for her to strip off the buttons she's paid her money for, to make her child brave, to give to such as you?' Oh, ma'am dear, I prayed then to be forgiven, and that the light would soon come, that I might find me way here, and give back the glittering things that made me forgit myself. And here they are—" and taking them from the bosom of her dirty, tattered gown, she put into Blanche's hand the missing buttons wrapped in a bit of paper.

"Is it possible? Did Adele, my child, give you these?" asked Blanche.

"She did, ma'am. I passed the garden with one

of the childer,—and she crying for food,—and the little lady called to me, ma'am dear, and says she, 'I've no money, but take these; they're all gould, and will buy food.' She, the innocent crature, to feel like that, that could niver have known how the wolf can gnaw; and the poor Irishwoman's prayer will be heard in Heaven, that she niver may."

Too much affected to speak, Blanche drew something from her purse, and, putting it into the poor creature's hand, commanded her voice sufficiently to ask where she lived, and then hurried away from the reiterated blessings showered upon her.

She went to her own room, and sent for Ethel, to speak to her; and having, with tearful eyes, recounted this anecdote of her child, she said—"And now, Ethel, my hard duty is to punish the little darling for telling me a falsehood. She said they were lost; and if I overlook the falsehood, in consideration of the good action, I fear I shall be acting unwisely."

"Have you ever told her," said Ethel, "not to mention any kind act she may do? for last night, when I was talking to her, she said you had told her not to tell, and that you were very unjust."

"Quite right—I did tell her so. Poor child! what had I better do?"

"Well, I think I should merely explain to her

that she has been wrong, but certainly not punish her this time; for it has been more an error of judgment than anything else—most excusable in such a mere child. Shall I send her to you?”

“Yes, do—no; I think I would rather you would talk to her for me, for I could do nothing but kiss and praise her. Oh! you don’t know the happiness it is to me when my dear child gives evidence of a good and generous disposition. How I have trembled for her,—knowing what her father was,—none but a mother can know; and that is not amongst the least miseries which await a woman who marries a man of unprincipled character.”

Whether it was intended or not she could not tell, but it seemed to Ethel that Blanche spoke these words with meaning; and she was glad to hurry from the room, in quest of Adele, to put an end to the conversation.

She soon succeeded in making the little girl understand that she had made a mistake, by explaining to her that she should, when asked by her mother, have simply and truthfully stated that she had given the buttons to a poor woman; that her mother only wished her not to boast of any charitable action, but not to deny it; and then, bidding her go to Mrs. Raymond, to be kissed and forgiven, she occupied

herself during the child's absence in commencing a letter to Cyril. It was so difficult to write to him—to say exactly what she wished in writing—to express all the affection she felt for him, and yet the anxiety she felt in the evident change she perceived; and she had written but a few lines, when she was interrupted by a knock at the door, and the entrance of Mr. Graham. He was astonished to see her, as he had not called on Mrs. Raymond lately, and did not know of the new arrangement, although he had seen the death of Mrs. Haward in the paper; but he expressed great pleasure at her residing with Mrs. Raymond—indeed, was more enthusiastic than Ethel thought he could be about anything: but then she had not seen him with Adele. The child had heard his voice, and in a moment was in the room, with her arms about his neck; then how his eyes sparkled and his cheek flushed, as he pressed his lips upon her forehead: and then Ethel noticed the reverential love which I have told you he always appeared to bestow on her.

To think of lessons that day was absurd—Adele had eyes and ears for no one but Graham. She had so much to show him—so much to tell him; and it was amusing to witness the interest with which he appeared to listen to what were matters of such

importance to her,—the tender manner in which he took the doll when she ordered him to nurse it, in his large hands holding so carefully the little wax image of babyhood: but was it not Her doll? And Blanche sat by, and gazed upon them with such a sweet smile of satisfaction; and, you may be sure, at the first opportunity, the anecdote of Adele and the Irishwoman was told to the delighted auditor, who was never tired of listening to that voice, much less when it spoke of the child they both so loved.

He stayed all day—his pupils had a holiday, and Mary had a friend staying with her, and so he could well be spared. He had had a toilsome week, but these few hours were a rich payment. They had a very happy day—a quiet, peaceful day, which often lives in one's memory long after it has passed, when all that actually occurred has faded from the recollection, because it was all so unimportant, and yet it was so happy. They dined early, and had an early tea, Blanche apologising to Graham for such humble habits, but it suited her so much better in her quiet way; but she knew gentlemen did not like it. He assured her that he did,—that it was a particular fancy of his. What mattered it to him the hour of the meal! so that he could see her, hear her voice,

see her smile, he was contented. And then, after tea, that delightful twilight!—that sitting by the open window, silently, all of them; she gazing at the stars, as one by one they appeared, “each on its golden throne,” and he gazing at her, his star: Ethel thinking of one so far away, trying to picture what he then might be doing, beneath a brighter sky than that above her, wandering, perhaps, in some orange-grove, thinking of her, as she was of him. Silence seemed also to have stolen into the heart of the merry child, for even she was still, sitting close by Graham, her little hand pressed fondly in his. At length the fast fading light roused Graham from his reverie, and made him talk of departure: he was very happy, but Mary would be anxious. And so he went, and Adele was sent to bed, and the candles were brought, and one happy day was numbered with the things that have been.

The next morning it was agreed they should visit the poor Irishwoman; for Blanche was most anxious to serve her, and she could never rest until she had accomplished anything on which she had set her heart: and so, with Ethel—who, having sat up late at night, had finished her letter, and could afford the time to go—she started.

Blanche had but little idea of the misery of the

London poor, and her heart almost failed her as she made her way through the locality to which the Irishwoman had directed her. The squalid, dirty children, almost impeding their progress, the half-starved, half-clothed women, the idle, vicious-looking men, the noxious smells from the houses, the filthy shops, most of them second-hand clothes' shops, with the soiled garments blowing in their faces as they passed, almost dissuaded her from her purpose ; but Ethel cheered her on with the thought of the good she might do ; and so on they went, and arrived at last at a small paved court, through which there was no thoroughfare, which proved to be the address given by the woman. Blanche stopped and asked a child if she could tell her which was Mrs. Kennedy's—"She didn't know, it wasn't there," was all her answer ; but a man going by at the moment, stopped, and pointing to one of the houses in the court, said—

"It's there, ma'am, in the kitchen ; she's a Irish-woman, aint she ?"

"Yes, Irish."

"All right, ma'am, there you are," he answered, and walked on.

"Oh, Ethel, what a dreadful place!"

"Well, it does not look pleasant, does it? never

mind, let us go," and they went on towards the house indicated. The door was propped open by a three-legged stool, and at the end of the dirty passage was another door, open also, through which was seen a little yard, where a few ragged clothes were hanging on a line, and where the steam pouring from an out-house, spoke of washing being taken in.

A starved and dirty cat sat on the apology for a mat, and hanging up in the passage was a very dilapidated cage, in which a moulting bird stood in one corner, on one leg, peering out of the wires as though vainly looking for something to eat. In the room designated the "parlour," stood a mangle, and a number of clothes laid on a table, from which pile a little pale-faced girl was lifting some down and placing them in the mangle, which she was exhausting all her strength to turn.

Blanche tapped at the door ; the girl looked round without ceasing her employ.

"Does not Mrs. Kennedy live here, my dear?"

"Eh?"

Mrs. Raymond repeated her inquiry.

"No, she don't live 'ere, ma'am."

"Not in this house?" asked Ethel.

"Oh! yes, in this 'ouse, but not 'ere."

"Down in the kitchen, is it not?"

"Yes," replied the girl, staring at them wonderingly.

"Shall we go down?"

"Yes, if you want to," she answered.

"Would you call her for me?" said Blanche, anxious as soon as possible to get away from this most unpleasing dwelling.

The girl stared again; but shuffling out of the room, went to the top of the stairs and called Mrs. Kennedy, saying some ladies wanted her. Some answer was returned, and the child, shuffling back, said—

"She says, will you go down?"

Accordingly Blanche and Ethel groped their way down the dark and broken stairs, and entered a damp brick kitchen, in which, with a half-naked child in her lap, sat the object of their search.

A few sticks were burning on the hearth—grate there was none—a mattress was on the ground, covered with a few old rags; and on the only other chair beside the one on which the woman sat, was a gentleman of about forty years of age—very handsome, but bronzed as with travel in warmer climes. He rose as the ladies entered, and smilingly presented the only chair, as the poor Irishwoman burst forth into apologies for not rising, but the child was sick,

and just gone to sleep, and she feared to wake it. Blanche and Ethel, with commiseration in every look and tone, begged her not to think of them; they had come to help her, they hoped, not to inconvenience her. And as she told them, with all the simple force of truth, the miseries she and her three children underwent, and the tears of sympathy filled their eyes, they knew not how keenly they were being watched by the Irishwoman's other visitor. They stayed some time with her, speaking words of kindness and encouragement, and left her with more money than she had seen for many a long day, and more hope than had brightened her heart for many a long year.

The gentleman who had watched them so keenly, and been so quiet during their visit, offered, when they left, to escort them through the disagreeable neighbourhood, to which they very gladly acceded; and the trio left the house together, followed by the eloquent blessings of the poor woman.

"How much trouble there is in that huge London!" said the gentleman, when they had come once more into the sight of the street.

"There is indeed; this seems a very sad case."

"Yes, poor soul; I only heard of it the other day, quite by chance—quite by chance. She has not

starved since. I have only just come from India, as you may see by my brown face. I have brought a little money back; and though I hate London, nasty, smoky, dirty place, I shall live here and spend it—spend it amongst these poor things, take some of these brats from under one's feet, build them schools where they can be flogged into good behaviour; nothing like flogging," he said, with the most benevolent smile, as though flogging was the farthest thing removed from his notions.

"There is nothing like education, I think," said Blanche; "only that it should commence with the masters and mistresses."

"Very true, very true; my schools I mean to have on an entirely new plan. But here we are in the respectable part of the town, so I will not intrude on you any longer.

The ladies thanked him for his kindness, and he, lifting his hat, wished them good morning; yet he did not walk on, but stood where they had left him, watching them till they were out of sight, and then retraced his steps to the Irishwoman's abode.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Oh! wretch, without a tear, without a thought,
Save joy above the ruin thou hast wrought.

* * * * *

Look on thy earthly victims, and despair."

Byron.

ON the same twilight evening which Graham had passed so happily at Mrs. Raymond's, Julia and Honoria sat together in the small drawing-room, hand-in-hand, looking out over the lawn and park, and away into the woods beyond, enjoying the stillness and the beauty. To Julia it was delightful, it was so long since she had been in the country: and even Honoria seemed to enjoy it now; it spoke to her of peace, and, with her sister beside her, something resembling happiness seemed to steal over her. The news of her mother's death had roused her partially from her torpor, and the idea of having Julia with her; but still she was strangely altered, she spoke very little, and seemed contented not to be talked to so long as she could hold Julia's hand, and be quiet. They had sat some time silent, when Honoria sighed very heavily, and said—

"Only another day or two of this peace: you must go home and Heathfield will return."

"Shall you tell him I have been here?"

"Not unless he should ask, or hear it elsewhere."

"Poor dear Honoria, I hope you will be happier some day."

"Happier, Julia! what have I to make me so? Nothing in this world, and I have little hope of another. And yet sometimes when I sit as now, watching those stars, I have a foolish fancy—and yet a comforting one—that my child is looking down upon me with a smile of assurance that I shall go to him, though he may not return to me." She spoke this in the same calm tone, and with tearless eyes—she could speak of the child so now—but Julia had no voice to answer her.

Honoria continued, "I think we have been a most unfortunate family, one and all of us. You have some deep grief I am sure, Julia. I wish we were dead—in heaven together, if we are good enough." And she laid her head down on her sister's shoulder, and then she felt Julia's hot tears raining down upon her face.

"Julia, don't cry, dear; it is no use. See how I have cried; and it is so wearing, and does no good. Why do you cry?"

"I am very miserable, Honoria. I did wrong, and I am punished. I know this, but it is hard to bear." And then she told her in that same tranquil hour—in that same room where he had stood by Honoria, whispering words of love—she told her how Forrester had wooed, won, and forsaken her.

Honoria listened to the end without interrupting her, wiped away her tears with her own handkerchief when her sad tale was ended, kissed her affectionately, but spoke no word—betrayed no evidence of the agony Julia's story had occasioned her. She had withstood temptation, bravely struggled with her weaker self, and with her own self-respect and an approving conscience, had come a calm, a peace, to which she had long been a stranger; and in the long waking hours of that night when she had last seen him, she had made a resolution to become wiser, calmer,—to fulfil her duty as a wife, to run with patience the race which was set before her, cheered by the knowledge that she was dearly loved by one being, and that if it should please Heaven to set her free, and he remained constant to the love he professed, she could recal him, and by her immeasurable devotion repay him. This had since then been her one thought, and it aided her in her efforts at self-command. Heathfield now

found it difficult to find fault with her, and the servants, one and all, would have died to serve their now patient, gentle mistress; but poor Mason would often cry and say, she would rather "Missis flew out at her," for it broke her heart to see her spirit so gone. Now this support, this prop, was rudely snatched away, and she learned the dread truth that he—her idol—was no longer worthy one tender thought,—that he was false to her, her sister, and himself. But Julia had endured enough through him; she should hear no more: and commanding herself by a great effort, she spoke a few words of consolation to her; and then saying it was getting late—for during their long and earnest conversation it had grown quite dark—they separated for the night.

The next morning Julia, whose nights were nearly always now sleepless and restless, rose very early, for the sun was streaming brightly into her room, and the birds were singing so blithely, that it seemed to tempt her from bed. There was only one of the under servants about when she came down, and she went back to fetch a bonnet and shawl, determined to ramble out a little. Across the beautiful lawn, through the flower-garden, where the standard rose-trees still bore bunches of their lovely blossoms, heavy with dew, scenting the air with their perfume,

Julia wandered, passed the conservatories in which were rare plants, and the hot-houses, where the rich fruit hung in large and tempting bunches; and then into the shrubberies, and the wilderness beyond, in which the lake's limpid waters reflected the waving trees and shrubs, and over a rustic bridge, across which a circuitous path led out into the corn-fields.

Occupied as she was by her own sad thoughts, still Julia could not help admiring all this beauty, to which she was so unaccustomed—and it looked more than usually lovely in the bright light of morning—and now and then she paused to look at the landscape, from which the veil of dew which had shrouded it was slowly rising, revealing little farms nestled amongst the trees in the valley, and here and there patches of violet-colour—each of which was a field of clover if you were near to it; and little sharp points rising up to the clear sky,—which were church steeples; and dots of things in the green patches—which were cattle grazing in the fields; and some tiny moving thing going along a winding road—which was, in truth, a great lumbering wagon; and something gleaming and glistening, like a narrow silver riband, which was a fine trout-stream in a meadow. All this, revealed by degrees, Julia stood

and looked at with increasing pleasure, when an approaching figure, coming through the corn-field by which she was standing, rather startled her, for it was a man she had a great horror of—namely Bob Rakes.

She turned to go home, but he saw her first, and hurrying on, wished her “Good morning.” She answered him quickly, and still walked hurriedly on; but he kept up with her, and after a pause, said, in a low, confidential voice—

“I can tell fortunes, Miss; I can.”

“Indeed,” answered Julia.

“Yes; shall I tell thee thine?”

“Mine is told, good man, and I am in a hurry now,” she said, as she quickened her pace; but he would not be turned away: and again he said—

“Let Bob tell thy fortune: I can tell thee better than the gipsy wenches. Well, then, listen and I’ll tell thee something else.” And pointing to the house—“She’s got a sweetheart,” he said, touching her arm, which made her shudder and start from him; yet in spite of herself, Julia turned a startled gaze upon the speaker.

“True,” he said, “quite true; thy comely sister, I mean; she’s got a husband—such a husband, ha! ha! What do she want with sweethearts? I saw

him," he continued in a low voice; "he's tall and handsome—he came at night, and went at night; Bob saw him—he sees everything—in the room that looks on the flower-garden. He went in and went out that way. What'll you give me to show you something I found?—ha! ha! I have it safe."

She knew not why, but her curiosity was painfully excited, and her attention riveted by the chattering of the half-witted man; and, against her better reason, she stopped and listened to him.

"What do you mean?" she said, half-angrily; "you must not say such things."

"But it's true, I say; look, look;" and he cautiously pulled from his pocket the corner of a cambric handkerchief. Instinctively Julia held her hand for it; but, with a cunning look, he shook his head and held out his hand. Hastily she dropped some money into it; for she would have given anything then to see that handkerchief: it had a border she too well remembered. He pulled it from his pocket, held it for a moment triumphantly above his head, and then dropping it into her hand, ran off with a loud and idiotic laugh. *

She stood for a moment, nervously grasping the handkerchief, with her eyes riveted on the border; and then, with trembling hands, turned

to the mark. Too true, too true ; her memory had served her but too well—G. F. marked in her own fair hair ! An hour from that time Honoria and the servants were distractedly seeking for Miss Haward ; and the water-lilies on the lake were broken and destroyed.

* * * * *

All is bustle and confusion in the house ; work has ceased, and in-doors and out the servants stand in groups, and with pale faces are whispering together.

Honoria and Mason are bending with intense anxiety over a pale and lifeless form ; whose long fair hair streams over the pillow, dripping with wet and tangled with weeds.

Medical assistance has been sent for, and in an hour or two the restoratives applied have been effective.

Julia has been pressed in her delighted sister's arms, and she is sleeping soundly with Honoria watching beside her.

After a long sleep she awoke ; but a burning fever seemed in all her veins, and at the doctor's second visit, he shook his head, and told Mason when she let him out, that he feared recovery was most doubtful.

Honoria nursed her with unremitting care, but

never alluded to the accident, though most desirous of knowing how it occurred; as the only information obtained was, that one of the gardeners heard a splash in the lake, and hurrying to the spot, saw the body rise, and immediately plunged in and rescued her.

Daily poor Julia grew worse, and the time approached for Mr. Heathfield's return. The invalid could not be moved; what was to be done? Mason was distracted with fears for her poor mistress, at this infringement of her master's will; for she felt sure he would be furious at the idea of one of his wife's relations living under his roof. He came, and it was Mason's task to tell him of the accident, and that the poor girl could not be removed; and wonderfully was she relieved at a mere expression of compassion escaping, and a mild desire to see his wife if she could be spared from her sister.

Of course Honoria obeyed the summons immediately.

"I am sorry to hear such bad news," he said, as she entered.

"Very bad news, Ernest; and I am sorry also that your house should be inconvenienced by it."

"That is quite a secondary consideration. Pray let every attention be paid the unfortunate sufferer,"

and he sat down and passed his hand over his forehead.

Touched by his unexpected kindness, she went to him, and laying her hand on his, said—

“Have you a headache, Ernest? You look pale.”

“I have a very bad headache.”

In a moment she took from the table a bottle of eau-de-Cologne, and gently bathed his temples.

Unaccustomed to such tenderness, he looked up at her and smiled.

“Thank you, my dear, that is very pleasant.”

Instead of the cool liquid, two burning drops fell on his temples now, and then he threw his arm round her, and drew her towards him, speaking soothingly to her, as she wept bitterly. He was very pale—deadly pale—and a red rim round his eyes spoke of the tears concealed beneath the eyelid. For a few moments they remained like this, then he rose suddenly, and impressing a kiss on her forehead said,—

“Take care of your poor sister, and of yourself, my dear. Do not knock yourself up with nursing.” And then he left the room.

What had worked such a change as this? Honoria was bewildered. And yet a trembling happiness seemed to come over her; for this change spoke at

least of peace, if he would be always thus. No more jarring, no more discord,—that peace and righteousness might dwell beneath their roof, if not love. At last in her husband's breast she had found sympathy. He had pitied her sister, thought considerately of herself. Perhaps this was her reward for her late struggle against temptation. She had resisted the wild infatuation of an unlawful love, and she was to be thus repaid. Thinking of this she sat long, till Mason came to tell her that Julia wished to see a clergyman.

“Is she worse, Mason?”

“No, no, ma'am, I think not worse; but she is very low, and says it would comfort her to see a clergyman.”

“Go directly, then, and fetch Mr. Herbert, Mason. I will go and sit with Miss Haward.”

She went immediately to her sister's room, and told her how kind her husband had been.

“I am glad of it, Honoria, very glad,” she said earnestly. “Have you written to tell Ethel how ill I am?”

“Oh, yes, dear, I wrote at once.”

“I should like to see her so much; but I suppose that is impossible; so I will be propped up and write to her.”

Honoria was afraid to trespass on her husband's new-found kindness for permission for Ethel to come. She did not dare ask it, or promise it to Julia. So she placed the pillows to support her, and gave her writing materials, and then the invalid asked to be alone till she had done writing. She would ring then. She soon rang, she was too weak to write much, and when Honoria came at her summons, she put a letter into her hand directed to Ethel, requesting it might be sent to her if she died.

In a short time Mr. Herbert arrived, and had a long interview with Julia. She needed consolation, for she knew full well that she had committed a sin: that in the first agony of that moment when she learnt the extent of Gerard's falsity, her head seemed to have gone, and she had rushed with wild desperation into the deep, cool waters, to bury there for ever her weary and aching head; never pausing to think how sorrows are sent in mercy, not in anger—sent to teach us patience, resignation, and submission; that we are never called upon to bear more than we can bear; and that courage and consolation will be found only in an appeal to that Being who has sent the chastening; not in adding sin to sorrow, by destroying that life which was lent us for a high and noble purpose, and is not ours to cast

aside when impatience and discontent render us weary of it. This, and more than this, did the kind clergyman tell the poor girl, when he had listened to the confession of her weakness. And though exhausted with weeping, and the excitement of the interview, when Honoria returned to her, a smile of peace was resting on her pallid face.

Administering some quieting medicine, Honoria again took her place beside her, and for hours she slept peacefully. When she awoke, she stretched out her hand to her sister and said,—

“Dear Honoria, come close to me, I want to talk to you. I want to ask you something, and you will answer me truly I know. Does not Gerard Forrester love you?”

Honoria started—and bending down her head over her sister’s hand kissed it tenderly, and said,—

“Do not excite yourself now, dearest, pray. Tomorrow—another day.”

“Another day may be too late, Honoria. Let me now hear the truth, I implore you. Does he love you? Do you love him? Was he ever here? See how calm I am. Tell me, pray.”

Still with her head bent down, Honoria answered—

“He *said* he loved me, Julia. He *has* been here; but we have parted for ever, I hope and pray. My

daily, hourly prayer is we may never meet again. Are you answered?"

"I am. We will say no more about it."

She raised herself on her elbow, kissed the head that was bent down by her side, and that name was never mentioned again by the two women thus cruelly wronged.

Day by day those who watched the patient sufferer saw the light of her eye fading, the strength of her system decreasing; but day by day with that failing strength, there seemed to come that peace which passeth understanding—the joy which no man taketh away. Heathfield's kindness and consideration for his wife seemed to increase rather than diminish, and it served to support her through this trial. And when at length poor Julia's eyes closed on this world—which had been, indeed, one of trial to her—nothing could exceed his sympathy and tenderness, till, as she sobbed on his bosom, she could have fancied the horrid past was all a dream, and that this could not be the man who had once been so cruel.

A day or two had passed since the young girl had been laid in her last resting-place, beneath the shadow of the old yew in the village churchyard, when Heathfield came into his wife's sitting-room,

T

with a face of ashy paleness, and taking a chair beside her, laid a burning hand upon hers.

"My poor girl," he said, in a hoarse, unnatural voice, "you have had enough to bear, one would think, yet you must bear more. Worn out with sorrow and nursing as you look, I ought not to tell you: but, Honoria, I must. I have kept it from you during these last sad weeks, but now you must hear it."

"What is it, Ernest?—Cyril? I have no one else to lose," she answered, in a voice of touching sadness.

"No, no; no death—but to my hopes. Honoria, I am ruined:" and, covering his face with his hands, he rocked himself backwards and forwards in his chair.

"What, Ernest! ruined? is it possible?"

He did not answer; the strong man shook like a leaf.

Now was it the wife's turn to soothe, to console: and as she spoke to him in gentle accents, bidding him take comfort,—that what, after all, was worldly wealth,—that they had no child to think of, only themselves, she felt that she was now doing her duty; and at that moment, motherless, childless, sisterless, and at one blow taken from luxury to poverty, she



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was happier than she had been for years, as she stood by her husband's side, and ministered to his comfort. Then, too, he found the full value of a wife—that treasure which his harshness and cruelty had driven from him in his hours of prosperity, but which now was all he possessed.

As soon as he grew a little calmer, he explained to her that a speculation, which had lately so entirely engrossed him, had failed completely; and as he had embarked nearly the whole of his property in it, of course there was nothing for it, but at once to break up the establishment, sell the estate, and manage to live on the small pittance which remained. Oh! how his heart smote him, as she spoke so cheerfully of giving it all up, already drawing a bright picture of another and a humbler home.

“I have been very, very miserable here, Ernest dear, beautiful as it is. In some little cottage, far removed from all painful associations, I shall commence a new, a more useful, and, in consequence, a happier life. Pray, then, do not be unhappy on my account; and I know that we shall find that out of this evil has come much good.”

How well had the furnace of adversity done its work! The once haughty, selfish beauty, the careless, irritable wife, was now kneeling at her husband's

feet, holding his hand, looking with tearful earnestness in his face, encouraging, comforting him, forgetful of her own past sorrows and her present sacrifice—thinking only of him and for him.

Oh ! how his heart smote him. He remembered another ruin, and his cruelty then ; and a vision of the bright and beautiful creature he had borne from her home rose up before him, and he prayed to be forgiven for the hand he had had in defacing that fair image,—for scarcely to be recognised as the same, was the worn and haggard face now gazing so kindly into his.

Great was the talk in the village, when it was found that the beautiful place was to be sold, the servants discharged, and the family leaving. A hundred opinions were afloat. Some said it was through the dreadful accident which had occurred ; others, that they were going abroad for Mrs. Heathfield's health ; and others mysteriously shook their heads, and said there was such a thing as spending too much money. But all they could say was no use. They went, the place was sold ; and in a few months the tragic death of Miss Haward, and the departure of the Heathfields, were forgotten, and no trace of the past remained, but the grave beneath the old yew-tree.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Above thy head through rifted clouds there shines
A glorious star. Be patient. Trust thy star."

Longfellow.

DEEPLY poor Ethel felt the loss of Julia; it seemed that sorrow and death were eternally around her, and that she was to be deprived of all she loved, or who loved her. Mrs. Raymond was most unremitting in her kindness to her, and at length proposed a little trip out of town, and arranged to write to nurse, and get her to find them lodgings somewhere in her neighbourhood, for the country about was very lovely, and she thought it would be pleasanter for Ethel to have so old and valued a friend near her. The letter of instruction was despatched to nurse, and on the same day one arrived for Ethel from Honoria, telling her of their reverse of fortune, and that they were going abroad for a few months to recover themselves, and enclosing Julia's, which, in the hurry and excitement, she had till now forgotten. With many tears, tears of sorrow for the poor girl, and for all the letter told, Ethel read it:—

“DEAR ETHEL,—When I am sleeping the sleep which knows no waking, you will read this, for I have told them only to give it if I die—if I live I will tell you myself, all which I now wish I had told you long ago ; for as I lay here dying, as I believe, I have thought how possibly you might have been wronged, and how, whether or no, I ought to have acted to you as I have done. I have not strength to write much, or I would tell you more ; but I will only say what concerns you, and implore you to forgive a dying repentant girl. The night before Cyril left England, some one whom I will not name—but whom I pray God will forgive, for all the wrong he has done—persuaded me to give the note you wrote Cyril to him, and then told me that you were a false, heartless coquette, that you were only laughing at my poor brother, and that *he* was endeavouring to wean my brother from his devoted love to one so unworthy ; that you had actually, after your engagement to Cyril, endeavoured to lure *him* into your trap, and that it was only his love for another,—alas, that other!—which saved him from becoming your victim also. And now, Ethel, as you read forgive me, compassionate me ; you will, when I tell you I loved this man better than my life : he persuaded me to watch you narrowly and untiringly, give him an account of

your every action, and stop by any means in my power your letters reaching Cyril.

"Ethel, I loved him with a blind, a wicked idolatry—I did what he asked me, I took the only letter you wrote to Cyril while you were with me, and sent it abroad—but *not* to my brother.

"He did not tell me to stop Cyril's to you, and therefore, of course, I sent that one, that arrived when you were at Mrs. Stanley's. I cannot write more; I am faint, sick—forgive me, Ethel, for you are revenged.

"JULIA HAWARD."

As she concluded this strange letter, she could scarcely believe she had read aright: could any love have made Julia capable of such an act! of such cruel wrong to her! However it was done, the mischief might be irreparable, and she shuddered to think it might; but she had this much of consolation,—Cyril's conduct was in a measure justified: the terrible power of this man (for she could not doubt who had been Julia's lover) was now removed, and it only remained for her to endeavour to counteract the evil Influence, not forgetting she must seek aid from above for such an undertaking. Julia's conduct she determined of course to keep secret from every one, and to strive herself to forget the part

the unhappy girl had acted towards her. Honoria's letter, though it told of their misfortune, still gave Ethel pleasure, for she saw in it a better, calmer, holier spirit; and it spoke moreover of Heathfield's reformation, of his kindness, his consideration; and earnestly Ethel hoped that now the infatuation which Honoria confessed to her, would be forgotten, and not add to the dread results she had anticipated at their last interview; for she remembered well with what a sad foreboding she had heard Honoria say, she did not know when she should see her again. She was meditating on all this, when the door opened and the servant announced Mr. Graham. She looked up expecting to see their old friend; but instead, before her stood the gentleman they had seen at Mrs. Kennedy's, and who had conducted them from her house.

"I astonish you, madam, I dare say," he said; "but you will forgive this intrusion though, I am sure, when I tell you that it is on behalf of the poor Irish-woman I come. First, though, allow me to ask your name, and whether you are the mistress of this house?"

Ethel smiled and answered—

"No, I am not; my name is Ashworth—Miss Ashworth."

"And the other lady?" he asked.

"The other lady's name is Raymond."

"Very good,—Raymond,—ah! well, that must wait. Now with respect to this poor woman; I have found her a situation which will, I hope, make her very comfortable. I have induced a friend of mine to take her to keep his Lodge; but it is indispensable that she and her children should be decently clothed, and there I'm at fault; and so I have come to you to get you to buy, or see about buying, the gingham and calicos necessary for this. Will you do so?"

"Most certainly I will. Oh! here is Mrs. Raymond—she will be very glad to help, I am sure."

With a look of astonishment, Mrs. Raymond entered the room, and appeared still more surprised when Ethel called the stranger Mr. Graham; but her astonishment gave way to interest in his errand, and she readily consented to do all she could for the poor creature, and then told him how she became first acquainted with her.

"Poor soul! honest creature—sure she was from the beginning. I'm always right about people—never was deceived in my life—bold thing to say, but I never was. There's honesty in every line of her face. She'll get on, I'm sure she will. There's

nothing like finding employment for the poor—better than money, fifty times : they like it best, too,—the better sort, at least,—much best. Good, honest people like to work for their living. I've often, when I could think of nothing else, made them work for themselves,—ordered boots and shoes of the men, paid for them, and then given them to their children ; or chairs and tables, if they were carpenters ; in short, anything they could make. Man, tells me he wants work : I say, What can you do ? and whatever he tells me, I set him to work at directly ; for if I don't want the article myself, I can always find somebody who does."

"The poor have a good friend in you, sir, I am sure," said Mrs. Raymond.

"Ma'am, they are very good friends to me, for they give me an occupation and an interest in life—and that reminds me of the second part of my errand here. I have a very keen recollection of faces, and from the moment I saw you I was persuaded I had somewhere seen you before ; and as I stared at you—which I did, I confess, rude as it was—a little village home came back to my memory, and I felt sure you were in some way connected with my childhood. I was so possessed with this idea that I went back to Mrs. Kennedy's and asked your name

and address. She did not know the name, but she told me where you lived ; and now, let me ask—for as you sit there earnestly listening to me, I feel more assured than ever that I know you. Are you, or were you—”

“ Blanche Maynard !” she exclaimed, eagerly starting from her chair, and holding out her hands to him ; “ and you, are Percy Graham, the big boy I was so afraid of ; is it not so ?”

What would poor Leonard have said had he witnessed such a proceeding—seen his brother actually take in his arms that idol he dare scarcely approach, and kiss her heartily !

“ There ! I could not have helped it if it had been ever so,” he said, as he released the blushing, laughing Blanche from his grasp. “ You may box my ears, if you like, but I shall only do it again. Oh ! if you only knew what a treat that was—I feel a boy again, I declare. God bless my soul, I don’t know how I feel. And now tell me, if you can—though I’m most afraid to ask—Leonard ? Mary ?”

“ Well—quite well—at least, your brother. Mary is still the same delicate invalid ; but how happy, how very happy they will be to see you ! They live at Brixton ; but I will send a messenger to

them, to Leonard, at least, for Mary must not be told suddenly. Good gracious, how strange it is! I feel quite bewildered, really—is it not strange, Ethel?”

“It is, indeed,” answered Ethel, who had been a quiet, but most interested spectator of the scene.

“I felt as you did,” continued Blanche, “that I had seen you somewhere before; and then I perceived a strong likeness to Leonard, so the moment you began to speak of knowing me, I felt sure who you were. But I must send at once to your brother; bid him break it to Mary, and you shall follow the note in an hour: all that time you must stay with me, and tell me everything. Ethel, you talk to him while I go and write,”—and flying out of the room, she wrote a hurried note to Leonard—the first she had ever written him. How that note was treasured! Years elapsed, but with discoloured paper and the writing nearly effaced, that note lay against as warm a heart as ever beat in a human bosom.

During her absence, Ethel had put Mr. Graham in possession of a few facts relative to Blanche, so that he might not touch on any painful subject, and when she returned she found Adele on his knee talking to him quite happily and confidingly, when she was assured he was Leonard's brother.

"But tell me," asked Blanche, "how is it that you know nothing of your brother and sister? Have you not been in correspondence with them?"

"Yes, until the last few months, when I have been up the country, moving about very much, and have, I suppose, lost my letters; for they have never come to hand. The last time I heard from them, Mary was complaining very much: they were then in Kent, Leonard working at a school. On my arrival in London, a day or two ago, I wrote to the old address, announcing my return, for fear of surprising Mary, and awaited with impatience a summons to come to them. It came not, and I then went down to Penshurst myself, only to learn there were no such people, no such school; it had been broken up for more than a year. Knowing no one in London, or elsewhere, I scarcely knew what next I meant to do, when I saw you, and felt a strange presentiment that you were an old friend, and that through you I should hear of my brother; and I am most thankful to Providence for thus restoring them to me. It was not comfortable, after all these years of exile, to have no friendly hand held out to one—no smile of welcome. Mind, I did not deserve I should—I feel that: I'm not complaining. I was a spoilt boy, Blanche, as you know.* Don't spoil this

child—don't do as they did with me. My poor mother, she little knew how I should live to rue the idolatrous love she bore me. It made me selfish, Blanche; that fearful vice grew with my growth and strengthened with my strength. *I*, was the one person I thought of—the one being whose comfort I was anxious to secure—because, for as long as I could remember, it was *the* person I had heard considered. I knew poor Leonard wanted to go abroad—that he thirsted for it: I cared little about it; but they said it was better for me that I should be rich, and a great man,—and I went. But my brother's disappointed face has been between me and my rest many a time since then, when the ocean divided us, and I knew that he was toiling to support Mary, in a capacity he disliked, and which was so beneath him; and I vowed that, if God spared me to return a wealthy man to England, Leonard should reap the harvest which I have sown,—if he had one wish ungratified which wealth could purchase, it should be his; and bitterly was I disappointed—how bitterly you can imagine—when I found him not. But I am tiring you, chattering so; and how these large eyes are looking wonderingly at me!" he said, kissing Adele's forehead tenderly.

Other eyes, with downcast lids, had filled with

tears as he spoke. What would Leonard have given to know that his name had brought them there—that that pity, so near akin to love, had made her weep, as she thought of his lonely toil for his poor sister, and of the many disappointments which he had been called on to bear! Ethel noticed her emotion, and took up the conversation, told him of Adele's love for Mr. Graham, and accounted by that for the manner in which she had been drinking in all he said.

“And why, my little maid, are you so fond of Leonard?” he asked.

“Because he tells me the truth.”

“A very good reason too, my dear; but a very uncommon one. I don't think we generally like people who tell us the truth; but the question is, what do you call the truth, Missy? If I were to tell you you were a very pretty little girl, should you think that the truth?”

“Yes; because mamma's very pretty, and everybody says I'm like her.”

“Bravo; what an honest child! Then that's the sort of truth that Leonard tells you, which makes you like him?”

“No, he doesn't; but he tells me the truth,” persisted the child.

"The fact is, Mr. Graham, my little girl," said Blanche, "was for some time with some people who deceived her on almost every point. They did not quite understand the management of little folks; and when she afterwards went to Leonard, and found that she could trust him implicitly, he won her love with her confidence."

"Aye, aye, Blanche, depend on it, they are twin sisters; it will never do to part them. In every relation of life it is equally important that love and confidence should reign together: but you must now excuse me, for you can well imagine how I long to hold my brother's hand tight in my grasp; and so, God bless you. When shall we hear or see anything of you? I shall take a bed-room close to them at present, until other arrangements can be made."

"Well, we are going out of town for some time in a day or two."

"Out of town! Where to? We'll come too—do Mary good."

"Oh, that it would! Do come," said Blanche, eagerly; "we are going to a place called Haverley, in Surrey, at least, on the borders."

"We'll come, rely on it; but I will let you know more to-morrow. Good-bye, and thank you a thousand times for the happiness you have afforded me."

He shook hands cordially with Ethel, kissed the child, and hurried away, after Blanche had again and again explained to him where it was, that he might make no mistake.

A few more days only passed, and in the snuggest of furnished lodgings, within a short romantic walk of dear Nurse Fenton's, are located Blanche, her child, and Ethel ; and next door the Grahams, Mary in a whirl of delight and excitement at Percy's return, whose hand she had scarcely let go since first she had clasped it.

They really were a happy party now. Ethel passed much of her time in nurse's cottage, and felt happy, tranquilly happy, in ministering to that old woman's comfort and amusement, who had once held in her arms Cyril Haward. And Leonard ! who shall describe his happiness ? It spoke in his eyes, no longer strange and melancholy, but beaming with hope and happiness ; in his cheek, no longer thin and colourless, but with a bright tinge stamped there by the pure air, by the renewed hope, and by a thousand new and strange sensations, which effaced the late years of sorrow, disappointment, and anxiety, and made him feel as though again he was a young buoyant lad in his own native village, with Blanche Maynard unmarried by his side. Mary and

Percy together, by the open window, or the invalid wheeled out in a chair, with her brother walking by her side ; Ethel with nurse ; and Leonard with Blanche and Adele,—thus they were most frequently disposed during the day. Then the long walks in a neighbouring wood, how those three enjoyed ! The child running on before, and Blanche leaning on Leonard's arm : how proud, how happy he was ! That silent wood, with the soft moss beneath their feet, the thick trees overhead, now shedding a few of their leaves, which fall occasionally with a soft rustling sound, when the light breeze wanders amongst the branches,—all silent but the sweet warbling of the birds, and now and then the child's merry voice ; and they wander silently,—they feel as though they must be silent too there : and here and there they come suddenly on a clearing—stumps of trees amongst the fern and heaths—and all the open country before them, with logs of hewn timber, where they are glad to sit down, whilst the unwearied child chases some bright-winged butterfly, or seeks amongst the underwood for nuts or wild-flowers. They have sought this favourite spot to-day, and are sitting there watching the setting of the sun. They have sat some time quite silently, at length Leonard says—

"We have been here one week—a whole week ; it seems hardly possible."

"It has gone very quickly ; but you have been very happy, Leonard, have you not ?" she answered, anxiously, he thought.

"Very, very happy. Percy's return has been, indeed, a great event. And how he has improved ! that in itself is so gratifying to me. He has behaved so nobly, so generously to me, Blanche. What do you think he told me to-day, when I said that I must return to my duties ? ' You have none to return to. I wrote before we left town to Mrs. Capel to tell her you would not resume them, and here is her reply.' He gave me her letter to read,—a most kind and flattering one ; and then he said, Blanche, for the last year or two he had been working for me, not himself, and that I was to consider myself the possessor of half his wealth now, and his heir at his death, should he be taken first ; he insists on my resigning dear Mary to his care : and, Blanche—I dare not go on ; it seems such presumption,—so wild and improbable," he says—"No, I cannot—" and rising hurriedly, he walked away,—away out of her sight amongst the trees. He knew not where he was going. The earth and sky seemed to mingle into one. He trembled for his reason, if thus, on

the verge of the happiness he had so long coveted, she should doom him to despair. Better go on as they were, he thought,—better fancy that she liked him as a friend, and serve her as one, than hear her coldly wonder at his boldness, and banish him from her presence. He was so humble ; she appeared so much superior to him.

Oh ! what a powerful, transforming touch has a pure and disinterested love ! Truly is it said that “it is love that inspires hope, and makes salvation possible ; it is love that redeems the lost, and preserves the blessed ; it is love that brings a man to judgment, and condemns him ; it is love that calls true hearts to inherit the kingdom of the Father.”

Well, as I tell you, he wandered on amongst the trees, getting entangled amongst the branches, losing the path, and then trying to retrace his steps, as it occurred to him she would think it so odd, his rising so abruptly,—when he heard the clear ringing voice of the child calling him—

“ Mr. Graham, Leonard, where are you ? do come.”

He tried to compose himself to meet her. The branches cracked and rustled, and with her bonnet half off her head, and her long hair pulled out about her face, she stood before him in his path.

"Oh! here you are. I have had such a hunt. Mamma says I'm to give you this," she said, presenting him with a sprig of heath, "and call you Papa."

If you had told him how he caught the child in his arms, and hugged and strained her to his fast-beating heart, and then almost cast her from him, and flew back to the spot where he had left her mother, and knelt by her side, and seized her hand, and tried to speak, and failed, he would not have believed you.

But the gentle, tender—"Leonard, dear, be calm," first aroused him, first assured him it was not all a dream, and gave him power to utter what had been the language of his heart so many dreary years. With the eloquence of love he painted all he had endured for her sake, and listened with a rapture indescribable, to her murmured confession of love for him, loving him even when she married another.

"I was very young, Leonard. I could not understand or appreciate the sacrifice you were making; and angry with you, with myself, I eagerly accepted the love Raymond offered me, and deserved to be the wretched wife I was. Forgive me, and let me try to make you happy."

The child now burst upon them with a wild, joyous

laugh, and hid her merry face in her mother's lap ; and then there were sounds of other steps and voices, and Percy and Ethel joined them. At a glance they read the secret. Blanche rose, and putting her arm through Ethel's, led her away, and told her all, while the brothers spoke together, and Adele ran away to Mary, who was in her chair at the entrance of the wood.

"But you will stay with us as long as you need a home, dear Ethel, will you not?" said Blanche, when she had concluded her story.

"Thank you : yes, if I am not in the way ; but it may be many years, if ever—before I have a home."

"The longer the better, as far as I am concerned, dear ; and I only conjure you, be very careful before you exchange my home and protection for one where you may be less happy."

Ethel only sighed and pressed her hand, for Leonard and Percy joined them, and they all proceeded towards home.

When they arrived at their little cottage, Ethel found a letter awaiting her from Maude. They had only just heard the tidings of Julia's death ; and on inquiry at Mrs. Raymond's, found Ethel was from home, and with great delight Maude heard in which neighbourhood, as her aunt Glanville had a house

a few miles only from Haverley, and she was going to stay there. Her letter was most affectionate,—full of sympathy and sorrow, and expressing the hope that she might stand in Julia's place to Ethel, as an intimate and attached friend ; and promising to come over, as soon as she arrived, and call on her.

A day or two passed over, of entire bliss to the lovers, and great happiness to the rest of the party ; for though sorrow and disappointment had pressed heavily on Ethel, still she was not miserable, “for so well is the harp of human feeling strung, that nothing but a crash that breaks every string, can wholly mar its harmony ; and on looking back to seasons which on review appear to us as those of deprivation and trial, we can remember that each hour as it glided, brought its diversions and alleviations ; so that, though not happy wholly, we were not wholly miserable.”

It was settled, that the marriage of Blanche and Leonard should take place at the little village church of Haverley ; and, therefore, all was now busy preparation. The bride and bridegroom were to proceed on a small tour after the ceremony, and the rest of the party go to town ; Percy and Mary to remain with Ethel and the child till their return, and then move into a house near, which Percy meant to buy.

Percy, who seemed never tired of heaping favours and presents on his brother and Blanche, insisted on sending to London for a simple but elegant wedding-dress for the bride, and Ethel and Adele, who were to officiate as bride's-maids, Mary's infirmities rendering it impossible for her to be numbered as one ; but, as usual, no murmur, no complaint passed her lips. Leonard was going to be happy ; what more could she desire ? she had no wish now, she said, ungratified. One morning when the two gentlemen were out and the ladies busy working, the clatter of horses' hoofs and a burst of very joyous laughter attracted Ethel to the window ; and there, looking most lovely in her riding attire, was Maude Forrester, attended by her cousin Philip. Ethel flew to the door to meet her, and was soon gasping for breath in Maude's vehement embrace.

" Oh ! I am so glad to see you ; why, what a pretty, rustic, charming place you've got ! "

" Come in, dear, and let me introduce you to Mrs. Raymond. "

" Oh ! yes, certainly. Phil, you must mind the horses ; you wouldn't bring James, so it serves you right, " said the laughing little beauty, shaking her whip at her cousin ; " but I'll take compassion on you and not be long. "

"We will find some one to look after the horses, dear," said Ethel, "in a moment;" and leading her into the sitting-room, she introduced her to Blanche, and sent to the son of the woman of the house to take the horses, so liberating Philip, who appeared very well inclined to get rid of the steeds and join the ladies. They remained some time laughing and talking; Maude seemed intentionally to avoid any allusion to the past, and she would not leave until she had made Ethel promise to come and stay a couple of days at her aunt's; and be ready on the following morning at twelve, when she should send the pony-carriage for her."

"You'll drive and fetch her, won't you, Philip?"

"If Miss Ashworth will trust herself to me."

"Oh! he's a very good whip, Ethel; you needn't be afraid; and the ponies are like two lambs."

"I'm not the least afraid; but I—we are all very busy just now—"

"Oh, nonsense! You can spare her, Mrs. Raymond, can't you?" pleaded Maude, with that beseeching glance there was no resisting.

"Yes, I can spare her for two days, but not longer."

"It shall not be longer, indeed. There, now it is settled; you will come. Twelve o'clock, mind,

punctually ;” and with another ardent embrace, she departed.

“ How silent you are, Philip,” said Maude, when they had proceeded some distance on their way ; “ do you know you are so altered lately ? you used to be such a rattle, such fun, and now you are so dull and stupid.”

“ Am I ? well, I have not much to make me otherwise.”

“ Why what stuff ! I am sure you are the luckiest fellow in the world.”

“ Prove it, Maude.”

“ Well, having me to ride with. Number one piece of luck.”

“ When you would as soon have the groom.”

“ Ah ! still if I don’t choose the groom in preference, it’s still luck.”

The young man tossed his head in a manner which might have been considered contemptuous by the young lady, if she had observed it.

“ Well, then, some day you’ll have plenty of money. Number two luck.”

“ And no one to share it with.”

“ Oh, you don’t know that. You have not asked the right person.”

“ I have asked you, Maude, until I am weary—

weary of your heartless trifling," he said, throwing on her a look of mingled reproach and anger. "And there may come a day when you will be sorry for it."

"Now, Philip, don't be foolish. You always will begin that subject, and I'm quite sick of it."

"You are?" he said, quickly; "then it shall never pass my lips again." And touching his horse lightly with his whip, he cantered quickly on. Maude followed him in silence for some time; but then tried in every way she could to draw him again into conversation. But no, it was useless. He only answered her in monosyllables. And so their ride terminated.

CHAPTER XIX.

"He who for love hath undergone the worst that can befall,
Is happier thousand-fold than one who never loved at all."

Tupper.

Two most delightful days Ethel passed at Mrs. Glanville's. She so gentle and ladylike; doting on her son, and he on her, it was a sight worth seeing their love for one another,—and the rough, noisy, but honest-hearted father, thinking there never was anything in the world like his wife, but his son,—the pretty rambling house, and beautiful grounds, with

Philip and Maude for companions, possessed all the elements for enjoyment. Often during those two days did Ethel contrast the conduct of this son to his mother, with one so incessantly in her thoughts; and again she thought how different he would have been, had he been blessed with such a parent. She was quite sorry when her visit came to an end, and she stepped into the pony phaeton to return; Philip again driving her. She had observed a strange difference in the manner of the cousins to each other, and had spoken to Maude about it, and received for answer, that Philip was a foolish, captious fellow, and that nothing would induce her to marry him, and so she had told him. Therefore Ethel was not surprised at the quiet and serious tone which Philip had assumed. But during their drive he seemed to recover himself, and talked more, much more, until within a mile of their destination, when he had again become silent.

After a long pause, he said—

“ I wonder when we shall meet again, Miss Ashworth ? ”

“ Well, I really can't say. We return to London in a day or two now.”

Another pause.

“ You have never brought away that book of

poems you wished to read. How stupid of me not to remember it."

"Oh dear me, how could I forget it?" she answered; "I put it on the hall table on purpose that I might not go without it."

"I will ride over with it to-morrow."

"Thank you, but that is giving you so much trouble."

"None in the least. I shall like it."

Again there was a pause. Another turn and they were in sight of the cottage. Ethel sighed. Philip looked eagerly at her, but said nothing. They drew up before the house. He sprang out, assisted Ethel from the carriage, as Blanche, who had seen them coming, opened the door; and merely saying he should see her next day, sprang back into his place, and touching the ponies smartly, was soon out of sight.

Very early the next morning the book of poems was in Ethel's hand, accompanied by a basket of choice flowers, brought from his mother, he said: she fully meant Miss Ashworth to have taken some, as she seemed so fond of them, but had forgotten it, and as he was coming, begged him to bring them. Ethel had said Mrs. Raymond was going to be married in a day or two, and so he said, significantly,

that flowers should be provided for that morning, for all the party. A long time he stayed talking, till it was so near luncheon, that he was persuaded to remain and take some; and when at length he took his leave, he rode full gallop home, with his head filled with a thousand vague thoughts, and his heart with as many new sensations. Had his thoughts shaped themselves into words, they would have been something to this purpose—

“ Well, that’s better than beauty. Maude’s loveliness is enchanting; but age or sickness will destroy that. *Her* charms nothing but death can destroy. She certainly is my notion of a wife; but of course she is engaged. She must be. And yet there never seems any one in attendance. But that letter she received at Crosby Hall! Well, Master Philip, this won’t do: no sooner dismiss one tormenting woman from your mind than you substitute another. But then she is not tormenting, there is a repose about her which, after that wild, provoking Maude, is delicious. My mother is so charmed with her too. She is so much more in her way than Maude. I have seen enough of the world, young as I am. I should like to marry now, and be quiet. What a fool I am!” And summing up his reflections with this satisfactory conclusion, he galloped into the stable-yard.

"That's a sweet young lady, my dear boy," said his gentle, simple-hearted mother, when he and his father joined them after dinner.

"Yes. Will you have a game at chess, dear?"

"With pleasure, love; but here's a miracle, Philip has seen a nice young lady he does not rave about."

"Mother dear, you're saucy," was his answer, as he kissed her smooth white forehead, and drawing the chess-table near her, he sat down to play.

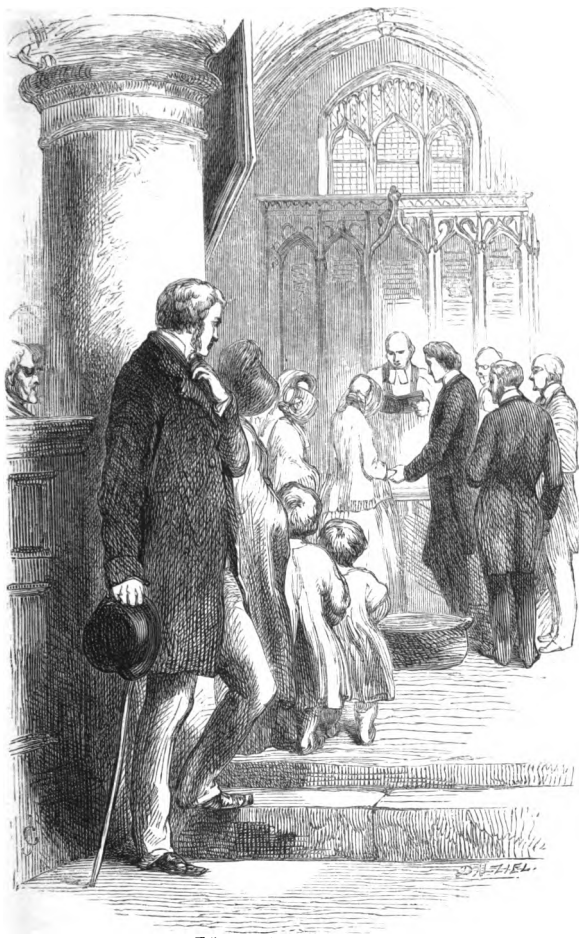
And the morning dawned which was to see Blanche Raymond the wife of the devoted Leonard Graham. There had been a wet fog quite early, but when Ethel entered Blanche's room with all the wedding gear, it was fast clearing away under the rays of a bright sun, which was making the drops of wet hanging upon every leaf, and on each tiny thread of the numerous spider webs, always to be observed on such a morning, glitter like gems. Of course it had got abroad that there was to be a wedding in the village, and every one that could, at an early hour, assembled in the church and churchyard. The dead were forgotten for the living, and crowds of children stood on the graves to catch a sight of the wedding party.

Soon they came—they did not keep them long in suspense—very simply dressed, walking quietly, but

with faces radiant with happiness. Blanche on Percy's arm, Ethel, the child, and the too happy Leonard behind them. When they entered the church, the first person they saw was Philip, with three beautiful bouquets, which he presented, and then retiring to a pew, remained during the ceremony. Nurse Fenton, assisted by Cicely, came of course to see it; the crowd pressed into church, the chattering voices of children and hurrying of feet were hushed, and the low voice of the clergyman, and the still lower responses of the bride and bridegroom, were all that was heard. From the commencement of the ceremony a stranger had made his way into the church, and stood with folded arms and pallid cheeks, watching the wedding party. Nurse turned to look at him, for he seemed out of place in such a scene—so pale, so sad, no smile of pleasure lightened his face; he stood close to her, and as the words were uttered—"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" he grasped her sleeve, and in a hoarse whisper, asked, "Which is the bride? quick, tell me."

"The one in grey, sir; she's a widow; the other looks most like the bride, doesn't she? bless her!" rejoined the old dame.

He made no answer, only nodded his head as if in thanks, never turning to look whom he had accosted,



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seeming to see nothing, but the altar and the wedding guests. It is over, the solemn blessing is spoken, they move into the vestry, the crowd rush out of the church; but the stranger stands on the same spot. Nurse turns to look at him again; but his face is from her, his gaze riveted on the door from whence the wedding party must issue, and Cicely leads her on.

They come—his heart beats faster—his eyes burn with the intense gaze. Not at the pretty blushing bride is he looking so fixedly, but at the pale young girl who walks behind her: a young and handsome man darts from a pew where he has been seated, and offers her his arm, she takes it, looking up at him with a sweet smile, and they go out of church, followed slowly by that pale and haggard-looking stranger. Oh! Ethel, why do more than wonted smiles visit your usually sad face? you know not what evil spirits they are conjuring. The cottage door closes on the happy party; the stranger hurries past: he has another being to seek, who *may* be glad to welcome him, unless she is sleeping the sleep of death. The thousand thoughts and memories that are now rushing through his mind! Ringing alternately in his ears is a young childish voice, and a cold satirical laugh, and deep impassioned dark eyes and gentle grey ones seem looking at him reproachfully;

he feels half mad as he hurries on, and stops at last before an old picturesque cottage, where some children are standing in the porch.

“Is this Mrs. Fenton’s?” he asked.

The children did not answer; but staring at him, went into the house. He walked up the garden, and knocked at the open door; a young woman answered the summons immediately, with her face pale, and stained with tears.

He repeated his inquiry.

“My name is Fenton,” she answered.

“But it is an old woman I want,” he said.

“My mother, sir,” said the girl; “she’s very ill indeed—she’s been to see the wedding; she hasn’t walked so far for months, and I think it’s been too much for her; I thought I should never get her home, and she hasn’t spoke since,” and the girl turned aside her head as her tears burst forth.

“And may I not see her?” he asked. “Let me; I think it would do her good. I am Cyril Haward; have you never heard her speak of me?”

“Oh, yes, sir!” she answered, quickly; “she does love *you*.”

There was something that touched him in this simple assertion more than he could have believed; and for a moment he could not answer. Then he said,—

"Go to her, and try to make her understand that I am here; and I will come in a moment."

She went in, and he stood where she had left him for a moment or two; and then she came and beckoned him, and he went softly in.

Seated in the arm-chair, propped up with cushions, was poor nurse, with lips and cheeks blanched, and powerless hands hanging by her side. Cicely went to her, and, lifting up one of the thin, wrinkled hands, said,—

"Mother, dear, here is the gentleman."

She opened her eyes, and looked up vaguely at him.

"Why, nurse," he said, with an effort at cheerfulness, "don't you know Cyril—Cyril Haward?"

A kind of spasm seemed to pass over her face as he mentioned the name, and she made an effort to rise. Cicely assisted her, and she sat up, and looked hard at him—long and fixedly; and then, shaking her head, fell back on her pillow, saying—

"No, no; he had a good, merry face, golden curls, and—no, no; that's not *my* Cyril."

Poor Cyril! he felt there was a world of truth in this, bitter as it was: he was not *her* Cyril—not the innocent, happy Cyril, with the golden curls, she loved and remembered. He turned away with a

heavy sigh—a sigh that spoke of disappointed hopes, of anguish, and despair.

“ You had better send for a doctor,” he said to Cicely, who, with tearful eyes, was watching her mother; “ and let the messenger take a line for me to the cottage where Miss Ashworth is,”—with apparent difficulty uttering the name,—“ and wait for an answer, if you will let me stay here till they return.”

“ Certainly, sir; my biggest boy can run with it.”

He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, wrote a few lines, and, having dismissed the messenger, suggested that the poor old woman should be got to bed; and, with the tenderness which she had bestowed once on him, he carried in his arms the helpless, almost insensible woman to the room from whence the angel of Death had borne his little nephew.

The doctor had met the boy before he had got far from home, and but a little while therefore elapsed before he arrived. He said he could do nothing for the poor old woman; that in a short time—perhaps a few hours—there would be an end to her earthly career: but they might comfort themselves thus far, that she was in no suffering.

Cyril sat in the parlour, his hand covering his face, scarcely knowing how to be still till the mes-

senger returned, and yet dreading his return. He came at length, with a little slip of paper, hurriedly written in the hand he knew so well,—

“I can scarcely believe my senses. Come to me quickly; I am awaiting you with painful impatience.”

He was gone before the child could realise that he was the possessor of a *whole* shilling; and soon, with trembling hand, he was knocking at the cottage-door: he knew not who answered it—how he got in: he knew nothing but that he was holding to his heart Ethel—his own true Ethel—who was sobbing there with joy.

“Hush! hush! my own, my darling one. Don’t—be calm, love. I will never leave you again,” were the first words he uttered. But she could not help sobbing—how could she!—as she clung closer and closer to him for whom she had suffered so much; like a woman, loving him perhaps the more for that.

Her first question, as soon as she could speak, was the inquiry of what brought him to Haverley?

“Why, my darling, I went first to your address in London, and there learnt from the servant that you were here. You can easily imagine how little time I lost in pursuing you, and I just reached here after you had started for church. I don’t know what the woman said,—only something about ‘gone to be

married.' I thought I should have gone mad, for of course I never dreamed of any one but *you*; and then when I saw you in church, looking so happy, I—but never mind, my own one; I find you still Ethel Ashworth—my Ethel: I care for nothing more." And he pressed her more fondly to his heart.

He had left the door ajar when he entered: it was suddenly pushed more open, and some one entered, before Ethel had time to disengage herself from Cyril's hold; the door was closed as quickly, and Philip Glanville rushed from the house, mounted his horse, and never drew rein till he reached home.

Evening closed over the little village of Haverley, and Ethel, who in the morning had officiated at a bridal, now stood at the bed of death, with Cyril beside her. Poor old nurse had gone to that land where she "would rest from her labours:" peacefully, in accordance with her quiet, pious life, she had closed her eyes to this world's joys and sorrows, to open them in that where there are no sorrows, and where the joy is greater than it has entered into the heart of man to conceive. She did not know Ethel, but she blessed her name before she died, and told Cicely to say she did; and that she hoped Master Cyril would be a good boy, that she might see him

in heaven. And silently and sadly, when the last offices for the dead were performed, and they had tried to comfort Cicely and her husband, Ethel and Cyril went home. Mary Graham and Percy exerted themselves to cheer them, but the excitement of the day had been too much for them, and they could not rally. They were to have returned to town the next morning, but at Ethel's request they remained until after the funeral of their dear old nurse; and she and Cyril followed her to her grave, thus paying the last tribute of respect in their power to one who had been as a mother to them; and on the day after they all took their way to town.

During the week which elapsed between nurse's death and the funeral, Ethel had had full time to explain to Cyril all that had transpired during his absence—his mother's death, Julia's, the unfortunate way in which she had consented to obey Forrester's will, Honoria's change of fortune and her husband's improved conduct,—all this he had heard, and questioned her minutely upon every subject, even to inquiring who was her handsome companion at the church, whom, however, he had ceased to be jealous of since her warm and affectionate greeting of himself. But with respect to all that happened to him, Ethel was yet in ignorance, saving that which she

knew, Forrester's unceasing attempts to make Cyril doubt her constancy.

The day on which they reached town they were seated, after dinner, in that cosiest of lights—fire-light, with Mary asleep on her couch, Percy having retired, as he said, for a “quiet cigar,” when Ethel, putting her little hand into Cyril's, said—

“Well, dear, and now that I have told you all that has happened to me, I think it is your turn to relate your adventures.”

A strange and altered expression passed over his face, as he answered with slight impatience—

“I have not had any adventures, Ethel; nothing but a disappointing struggle to obtain employment, which has ended in my being in England penniless as when I left, and in debt to that scoundrel Forrester. I owe him something,” he added, fiercely, “which I will pay him one day.”

“Hush! hush! dear Cyril, ‘Vengeance is mine,’” she whispered softly. “But how was it that, with letters of introduction, you could not get employment in Seville?”

“Because there were no vacancies, my dear girl.”

“How strange you should have been so unfortunate! How long were you in Seville? and did Forrester pay for you all the time?”

"I was only a few weeks there, staying with some friends of Forrester's. This room is fearfully hot," he said, rising, "I shall go out a bit, I think; follow Graham's example, have a cigar. You don't mind, dear love, do you?" he said, seeing a disappointed expression on Ethel's face. She was far too unselfish to say yes. If he wished to go, she would not prevent him; but she was vexed and anxious at his now evident wish to be silent on all which had transpired while he was abroad. He went out, and she sat by the fire musing.

Since the first excitement of his return, she had noticed with pain a serious change in him. He was not, as she had before thought, and as nurse had said—*her* Cyril. His ingenuous, open brow was clouded and thoughtful, his eyes blood-shot, his manner hurried and constrained, at times brusque and cross, even to her; and she felt sure that some painful circumstances connected with him were unknown to her, and feared that the Influence she dreaded had done its fearful work. She observed, too, that Percy Graham, for whom she had acquired the greatest respect, treated him coldly, and seemed watching him narrowly, and that his manner to her was more than usually kind; and, in short, now, even with Cyril returned, she was as anxious and uneasy as before.

He said he should never rest till he obtained some good and permanent employment, and was out continually seeking it, he told her ; but weeks elapsed—the bride and bridegroom had returned, and still he was not successful. Blanche and Leonard were very kind, asking him continually to dine and encouraging him to pass every evening there ; but Ethel could see that all these kind friends appeared anxious and uneasy about her, and watched him with apparent distrust.

Percy Graham pursued, as he said he would, his laudable and benevolent intention of ameliorating the condition of the poor ; and day after day he passed among them in his parish, doing real practical good. He set bricklayers, carpenters, and masons to work, to improve their own dwellings, for which he paid them ; with Ethel's ready assistance, employed their wives in making clothes for themselves and their neighbours ; sent their children to school ; induced many to subscribe a small sum weekly for the institution of a book-club ; so that the men in their now orderly homes, could read amusing and instructive works, without spending their evenings in some low public-house, perusing newspapers, which sowed in their minds the seeds of rebellion and encouraged vice. It is true he had money at his command to carry out these

excellent projects ; but it was the untiring industry and perseverance with which he applied himself to the work which brought him success. Had he generously but thoughtlessly distributed money amongst the poor around him, simply because he found them poor and starving, he would have done more harm than good ; he would have encouraged that idle, dependent disposition—that relying on others for support, which in nine cases out of ten is the *cause* of abject poverty. He endeavoured to teach them that they must work to live ; told them that it was his own honest exertions which had produced him the wealth which enabled him to help them ; told them—and made many feel that he was right—how much sweeter was the food they earned than that bestowed in charity ; how much prouder they would be of the shilling which was the fruit of their own labour, than the sovereign given them in pity. He had the power of expressing himself in a manner which these poor uneducated people felt and understood. The simple eloquence of truth finds an answer in every heart ; and he had scarcely one failure where he endeavoured to convince ; scarcely one family that did not respond to his encouraging, inspiring advice. It was well for him he was thus engrossingly employed ;

for he, who in many climes, amongst beauty of every race, had passed unscathed—heart-whole, was touched at last by the gentle goodness, the quiet, unpretending Ethel Ashworth, and bitter to him was the knowledge that her young heart was given to one he felt was utterly unworthy of the treasure. The consciousness of his own feeling for her prevented his expressing his opinion to any one about Cyril; but he was fully determined to watch him narrowly, and if he found anything positively against him to report it to Blanche.

The days passed on. Ethel heard frequently from Honoria, (to whom, of course, she had written to announce Cyril's return,) and her letters always contained assurances of her own domestic comfort. She had a lovely little cottage in a Swiss village; had formed a pleasing acquaintance with an English resident family and the curé; and their days glided by, unmarked by either great joy or sorrow, "but with a peace," she wrote, "for which I have long sighed."

One morning the post brought two foreign letters; one from Honoria, for Ethel, and one for Cyril—for he had had his letters addressed there, having no fixed abode. He generally came in from his lodging near, every morning, to see Ethel and get his letters, and when he arrived she let him in as usual, and

presented him the letter. She noticed the slight start with which he took it, hastily opened and read it, thrust it into his pocket, and for some time after he seemed silent and abstracted.

"Well, dear Cyril," she asked, "what is the programme for to-day? What are you going to do?"

"I don't know, positively, Ethel, I don't know." He rose and shut the door, and coming back to her said, "Ethel, dearest, do you believe I love you?"

"Yes, dear Cyril, I do. But—"

"But—what?"

"I should believe it still more if you trusted me. Since your return I have often tried to summon courage to speak to you. We are alone now, and I will tell you what has been long distressing me. In our childish days—before we knew anything of the love which brings such torturing anxiety—I was your little confidante. You told me all your joys and griefs, and liked to receive my sympathy and my simple, child-like advice. Cyril, I am older, wiser now; but I do not love you less. Why not make me still your confidante? You would meet with the same warm sympathy, and it may be, better counsel."

Tears, large tears, stood in his eyes, as in such quiet, touching accents she spoke to him. At length he said—

“ Ethel, those childish sorrows are no more. I dare not confide in you now.”

“ Cyril, you frighten me. What can you mean?”

“ Mean, Ethel, that I am not worthy of the love which pales your cheek; that the warm prayers you have breathed to Heaven for me have not been answered, Ethel; that I ought to go away from you—never see you again. Your friends will all tell you so, and I cannot gainsay it. But if *you* abandon me, my downward course is certain.”

The agony of that moment who shall tell but those who, like Ethel, have suffered it?—who have sat with blanched face, breathless, longing, yet dreading to hear a confession, which will make them banish from their heart some being who has been their object in life; whom to live for, to serve, has been their one thought. With a calmness which spoke of anguish too deep for outward show, she said—

“ In justice to me, Cyril, tell me what makes you speak like this; if you have been unfortunate I shall love you more; if faulty, I shall not cease to love you; have I not faults myself?—only,” she continued, more earnestly, “ tell me the truth, that is all I ask.”

He had been pacing the room while she spoke; he sat down now, and drawing a chair near her, said in a low voice—

"Ethel, if when you hear that during the whole of my residence abroad, I was supported by the gaming-table, staking at times sums I knew I had no means of paying,—that I have run away from Seville, owing a sum it seems madness to dream I shall ever possess,—and you have read this letter," he said, producing the foreign one—"if after this you still stand by me, still love me, I shall think Heaven has not yet abandoned me, and I will die before I give up the attempt to repay the sum I owe, and restore my position to that of a gentleman. Only let me implore you to remember that through all, unchangingly I have loved *you*, Ethel, and that that love will never cease but with life. I shall not come back here till you send for me at my lodgings;" and rushing from the room, he left Ethel, almost stunned by what she had heard, holding the letter in her hand.

She read it through, every line, every word of the closely written page. I need not give it here—sufficient that I tell you it was signed "Your wretched, but devoted, Inez," for you to imagine the tenor of it—to imagine Ethel's feelings. And yet his last words were, he had loved her unchangingly through all. To this honest, right-minded girl, this was poor comfort. He could not have been true to her without

being false to another. What was she to do ? First, not betray him ; he had confided in her ; she would keep his secret : so she hurried away to her own room—that sanctuary where so many tears are shed—that she might not be surprised by Blanche or Leonard, and there tried to make up her mind what to do. He did love her, it was evident, in his way ; but oh ! it was not the way she hoped he did,—it was not the strong, elevating love, which makes him “ who loves another, love *himself* e’en for that other’s sake,”—it had not been, as she hoped it would, his shield, his safeguard,—it had not made him resist temptation,—it had not been a talisman to keep him faithful, when the lustre of other eyes would lure him away ; in short, he had not loved her as she loved him ; and yet, if she abandoned him, he would be lost, he said, now and for ever. His pale, haggard face, his voice of anguish, came back to her memory, and pleaded so strongly. Forgiveness, mercy, hope,—the tenants of her gentle heart,—pleaded his cause, too, earnestly :—

“ Try him once more ; he has been sorely tempted. Deeming you false, he was mad, desperate. You are his anchor ; desert him, and he will surely sink. Stay with him, support him, lead him back to right, and save a soul from death.”

They triumphed,—those sweet spirits,—and she sent a letter to his lodgings, enclosing the one he had given her to read.

“I wish, dearest Cyril, the confidence you have at length reposed in me would have imparted better things; but to reproach you now would be as cruel, as useless. I have suffered more within the last half-hour than in all my, I may almost say, joyless life. But let the past rest in oblivion, let us never mention it again; but only let it be a warning, a useful lesson to you. With respect to the enclosed I can say nothing. I ought not to have read it. Poor thing! she has my prayers that Heaven will send her support when she learns you have deceived her. The future must be now your care. If, then, you strive to redeem the past, if there is no recurrence of past follies, (I will spare a harder name,) I will never desert you, but help you to try to become a better and a wiser man. But Cyril, dear Cyril, there is a Power greater than man's. Do not trust to your own strength, nor to mine; but pray to Him for grace to resist temptation, and strength to abide by your resolutions. Come as usual this evening, and receive the assurance of the unabated love of your

“ETHEL.”

Her pen stopped as she wrote the last line; for she thought, was it true?—was her love unabated? But she let it go, for she knew nothing could be done with Cyril but by love, and she thought she might write it; but she felt that the foundation of her love was gone, and then it must be insecure. She could not longer *respect* him: he had proved himself weak, vacillating, unfit to be his own guide; how could she hope he would be hers?

He did come in the evening as usual, and the hurried, "God bless and reward you!" repaid and encouraged her; and she slept that night more peacefully than she had done since Cyril's return. Poor Ethel!

The next day,—after Cyril had been in as usual, and had gone out to see some one on business, who had promised, if he could, to assist him,—Blanche came up to where Ethel was sitting working, and, bending over her, kissed her very affectionately. Ethel looked up, and smiled.

"How well and happy you look, dear Blanche!"

"I am, Ethel—both. I wish you were."

"So I am, Blanche; very well."

Blanche shook her head, and then said, very kindly,—“Dear Ethel, we all love you very much—you have made us all love you as though you

belonged to us; and so you will perhaps excuse what may seem otherwise like impertinent interference: but both Leonard and Percy are very anxious about you with respect to Mr. Haward; and yesterday Percy told me, that if I could persuade you to break your engagement with him, he thought he could get him employment in a mercantile house abroad, and he would undertake to send him there without expense to him. Don't be angry, dear Ethel."

"I am not in the least angry, dear Blanche—only astonished. What can your husband or Mr. Graham know of Cyril, to make them think such a course desirable?"

"Why, I hardly like to tell you, dear; but you know Percy is out a great deal, in all manner of places, in London; and he has heard of him, once or twice lately, not leading quite such a good life as he should, engaged to you. But you know, dearest, if you were to frighten him, by pretending to break off your engagement, and let him go abroad, it might cure him, and he would come back quite fit to be our dear little Ethel's husband." She spoke the last sentence cheerfully and encouragingly, for she was terrified at the stony pallor which had succeeded the flush on Ethel's face.

"Blanche," she said, earnestly, "do not attempt to deceive me. Cyril has honestly confessed the errors he has been guilty of abroad; but he spoke of them as past, and I forgave them. If he is continuing a course of sin and folly here now, in face of all I have said, then indeed there is an end to my dream. Tell me the truth, what does Percy know of his own knowledge respecting him?"

"I will not deceive you, dear Ethel; for I should not like it myself. Cyril frequents, every night, a gaming-house of notorious character, where he has been seen by some one Percy knows, frequently in a state which you would blush to see him in. Last night, Percy himself met him, and stopped him—offered him any money he wanted, so that he would go back quietly to his lodgings; but he fiercely told him not to interfere with what did not concern him, and went on."

"*Last night*, Blanche—don't say last night!" said the poor girl, grasping with intensity her friend's hand, and gazing wildly in her face.

"Too true, dear Ethel—only last night."

She tried to speak, but only a sound came forth, which was more a groan than a word, and she burst into an agony of weeping.

Yes, that is right, Blanche: gently, soothingly lay

that throbbing head on your bosom. You cannot be too gentle, too kind; for with one blow you are tearing from the heart, where they have taken such firm root, Hope, and Love, and Truth,—destroying a whole world of sweet thoughts, all pleasure in the Past, all looking forward to the Future!

CHAPTER XX.

“If any strength we have, it is to ill;
But all the good is God’s, both power and will.”

Fairy Queen.

MAUDE FORRESTER returned home shortly after Ethel’s visit to her aunt, and found her family in no small excitement. Lizzy had received and accepted a proposal from a Sir Dugald Dalgetty, a young Scotchman, with a pedigree much longer than his purse, but yet possessing sufficient property to maintain his wife like the Lady he would make her, and they were to be married immediately.

Lizzy, who was extravagantly fond of her brother, was fretting very much at his silence, and that he could not be present at her wedding; indeed they were all getting anxious about him, for they had not heard from him for months; the last time he wrote

he gave a very vague account of himself, merely saying he was going to leave Paris; but that he should not go on to Seville: they had no idea, therefore, where to write to him.

But fortunately before the eventful day, as Lizzy's happiness might otherwise have been clouded, they received a few lines from him, dated from Malta, saying he was well, but giving no hope of his return, asking them to write and tell him all the news, especially what had become of "poor Mrs. Heathfield." With the same date his friend with whom he constantly corresponded in Seville, received a long letter, the substance of which I shall give you in his own words. After a slight mention of his arrival in Malta, and his idea of the place, saying he knew not why he stopped there, as his first intention was to go to India; but he followed what his impulse dictated, for he believed it was but another name for Fate; the letter proceeded thus—

"I am really very sorry that any friend of mine should have given you so much trouble. What a devoted lover Miss A—— has chosen for herself, thus at the first sight of beauty to forget her! I really little thought that even the loveliness of Inez would have drawn him from his cold English idol; but why do you worry yourself about it? let them marry,

in heaven's name, and try and live upon love. I do not see why it should distress you,"—here the letter broke off and began again—

"I was stopped by the arrival of your letter, and its contents have indeed amazed me—left Seville owing two hundred pounds, incurred at play! what, the good, innocent Cyril Haward! is it possible? wonders will never cease; this and Inez together, would have been far beyond my most sanguine hopes. It will be some time, I think, before we read the announcement of the marriage of Cyril Haward to Ethel Ashworth: what says your cousin to this slight mistake of her Cavaliere? It is always the way; things come to pass when we have ceased to care for them: my whole thoughts are now engrossed differently by a far more interesting subject, and I should be as well pleased to hear that poor fool had come into a large property, and married his adoring Ethel, as to hear of this *esclandre*. But I must close this rambling epistle. I shall be glad to hear from you whenever you have time to write."

A short time after this he received, as he had requested, a long letter from home telling him all the news of Lizzy's wedding, of the changes in the Haward family, the death of Mrs. Haward and Julia, Ethel's residence with the Grahams—the school-

tutor, he must remember, now so changed, so happy, the proud husband of a very pretty wife; the reverse of fortune which had happened to the Heathfields, and their change of abode from England to a little village near Geneva, where it was reported they were very happy. Eagerly he perused every line of this, and even he felt a slight pang of remorse as he read of the death of the unhappy girl, whose only fault had been, she had "not loved wisely, but too well." And yet he turned from the contemplation of this to the hope of making a victim of her sister: he had no tie to bind him to Malta, he was his own master, he would visit Geneva, seek her again, try once more to lure from the path of duty the unhappy woman who had struggled so bravely to pursue it.

"Why am I always to be foiled?" he thought. "I love her, I know she loves me, let her be mine, and I will spare no pains to make her happy. This Haward family has been my torment; but they are nearly exterminated now; and Honoria shall be mine, or I will die in the attempt."

Forrester left Malta that day, as an outward-bound vessel, wending its way to Calcutta, entered the harbour; bearing among its passengers one whose face of stern despair might have touched with some remorse the author of his misery—he who had so cruelly,

ruthlessly, rested not till he had destroyed his happiness here and, it might be, hereafter ; who by a strange fascination had lured him away from all that was honest, pure, and of good report.

None could help pitying Cyril ; even Graham, who was most angry with him, could not but compassionate him, when he listened to the history of his fall from bad to worse—heard the ingenious cruelty with which Forrester had led him on ; lending him money to play with, urging it on him when he found his inclination led him that way ; and with fiendish malice, watching the fatal propensity grow upon him.

After Blanche's revelation to poor Ethel, she begged she might not see Cyril ; but deputed Percy to tell him, from her, that it was her wish he should accept Percy's generous offer to go to India, and there endeavour to repair his wasted, ill-spent hours, by hard and unceasing application to business ; by degrees repay the sum he owed in Seville, and his passage-money to Mr. Graham ; and that he was to consider their engagement entirely dissolved, at any rate for the present.

“ Ask Mr. Graham,” she said, “ to tell him this very gently, dear Blanche, very kindly—to soften it to him as much as it will permit. And he may tell him, God knows, with perfect truth, how utterly

wretched it has made me, and what agony it costs me thus to part with him; but I cannot, will not marry a man I cannot respect; and how can I, one who has thus deceived me and others? How much I could say to him! but I will not trust myself to see him. I am so sorry to give you all so much trouble; but I don't think I shall be a trouble to any one much longer."

"Do not talk so, darling Ethel, I know it is all very hard to bear; but brighter days will come; though God wills that we should suffer, he will not have us suffer always: you are so good, you will be rewarded."

"In heaven, dear Blanche, I hope," she answered, with a smile more touching than her tears; and kissing her, and thanking her for all her patience, she asked her to go at once to Percy.

In his interview with him, then, Cyril told him his history; and when Percy had heard it he found it more difficult than he had imagined to give him Ethel's message. Cyril concealed nothing from him, for he had taken a fancy to Percy, and he felt grateful to him, although he had at the time roughly repulsed him for his offer of money, and his effort to stop him in his fatal course. He told him how, the night he left Paris, Forrester had again solemnly assured him

of Ethel's falsity; that he had gone to Seville, mad, desperate; and there, with the friends to whom Forrester sent him, had found an exquisitely beautiful Spanish girl, to whom he paid most undisguised attention, and found, when too late, that she loved him. Enraged with Ethel, careless of consequences, unmindful of the suffering he might one day cause this innocent girl, he drew from her a confession of attachment, and for a time believed that he loved her himself; when a letter from Ethel awoke him from his dream, and all his fervent affection for her—his first love—returned to him. But he had involved himself in debt in every direction; and though he could not obtain employment,—for his character for drinking and playing had got about,—yet he hoped some turn of luck would enable him to defray his debts, and bring him again to England and Ethel. But misfortune pursued him, loss followed loss, and, at length, one night he made his escape from Seville, with a few pounds only, which he had won at play; an insufficient sum for anything but flight.

With mingled pity and horror, Graham listened to this history. This was the man his paragon of perfection—his darling Ethel—loved, and might have married: and yet he could scarcely summon courage to tell him she renounced him. But he did at

length: and then the burst, first of rage, and then of passionate tears, was piteous to behold. Graham tried to soothe him; but when he, after a while, grew calmer, it was even worse, for he looked as though he was turned to stone. From that moment he seemed a mere machine, moving as he was told, eating nothing, but swallowing draughts of beer, spirits, or wine, in spite of Percy's urgent advice to the contrary, who was perseveringly kind and attentive to him, never leaving him until he was on board the vessel which was to carry him abroad; for the moment he heard Ethel's determination, Cyril was ready and anxious to leave England.

Ethel never left her room till she heard he was gone, asked no other question about him, made no outward lamentation, no outward sign of grief. She thought her friends had had enough trouble with her; she would not, if she could help it, further distress them; and so she went about her accustomed employment with a calm, passive,—at times a cheerful face; and only the heavy eye, pale cheek, and languid step spoke of her inward sorrowing—of the long, sleepless, tearful nights.

Blanche had written to Honoria at Ethel's request, to tell her of the late transactions; and by return of post came a most pressing invitation for Ethel to join

her in Switzerland, and stay with her as long as she liked. She was sure the complete change of air and scene would be beneficial, and she would do all she could to cheer her; that some friends of their new acquaintance,—a lady and her son,—were coming there, and would take Ethel; she could not now refuse, as all had been arranged,—the people written to, with a request to take charge of her; and they would wait for her at the Dover Castle Hotel, Dover, on the following Monday week.

Caring very little what became of her, and wishing to relieve the Grahams of the charge of her until her spirits were somewhat recovered, Ethel readily consented, and, on the day appointed, started for Dover.

Arrived at the hotel, she was shown into a private room, where she found a lady and gentleman amusing themselves at the window, watching the vessels in the harbour. They turned as she entered, and with an exclamation of joy, she recognised Mrs. Glanville and her son. Most warmly the old lady received her, kissing her again and again, and assuring her the surprise was delightful.

“Why, my dear child, I expected to see some stiff, strange young lady, that I was to be very polite to, and then to see you, whom I feel as though I’d

known all my life ; it's delightful ! They only wrote me word I was to take charge of a young lady,— never said your name. It's a delightful surprise, isn't it, Philip ?”

It had been a trying moment for Philip ; but during his mother's speech he had endeavoured to master his emotion, and managed to say all that was polite and proper on the occasion : but his manner was altered and constrained, and it suddenly flashed through Ethel's mind, that which had never occurred to her before, that it was he who had opened and closed the door so suddenly during her interview with Cyril, which was probably the occasion of his present embarrassment.

“ But, my dear girl,” said the old lady, “ you're looking very sadly ; have you not been well ? ”

“ No ; I have been very ill,” she answered, in a low, tremulous voice.

Philip turned quickly, and looked at her. Poor girl ! she did look ill. In a moment he forgot all, and eagerly asked if he could get her anything after her journey ; but she said she could not eat, and turned her head away, that he might not see the large tears roll down her cheek. He did see them, though ; and, hurrying from the room, he ordered some refreshment and wine immediately, which he

brought her himself, and with the gentlest tenderness persuaded her to take.

What had occurred he could not imagine, but he was sure some great sorrow had befallen her; and he determined to leave no means untried to improve her health and spirits; for that would be a happiness to him, even though she loved another.

Gallantly the vessel which was to carry them to Calais rode out of the harbour. It was a fine bright day, though cold; and Ethel, seated beside Mrs. Glanville, well wrapt up, with Philip anticipating her every wish, began to feel the invigorating effect of the sea breeze, and the refreshing sense of amusement without exertion. And soon, beneath a brighter sky than she had ever before seen—in the exquisite, luxuriant Pays-de-Vaud—surrounded by kind friends, whose unwearying efforts are directed to making her happier and stronger, a faint bloom is stealing back to Ethel's cheeks, and a faint smile to her lip.

Philip is incessantly with her: he joins their excursion parties on the lake and on the mountains; he passes evening after evening in the cottage, at chess with Mr. Heathfield, or listening to Honoria playing—no matter what, anything, so that he is near that pale, sad girl—so happy if he can wake a

smile, so satisfied if she has appeared amused, and he has been beside her.

It was soon perceivable to all, and his gentle mother too, that Philip's heart was irretrievably gone; and it caused her some anxiety, as she feared that his love was not returned. To the friend with whom she was staying she imparted her fears; but she, who had known Philip from a boy, and loved him almost as much as his mother, could not believe it possible that any girl could see and not love him.

Mrs. Petersham was the most innocent, simple-minded woman in the world—one of those kind, homely people, who soon become more than acquaintances—whom you soon learn to call friends. She had been a very kind one to Honoria, and her three merry daughters agreeable companions to her; and the two families had cemented quite a warm friendship. She would have been very glad had any of her girls fancied the handsome Philip Glanville, and was quite indignant at supposing that Ethel could be indifferent to him.

“Why, my dear ma'am,” she said to Mrs. Glanville, “see the advantages your son has had, the good society he has mixed with, then his cleverness, his gentlemanly manners—to say nothing of his handsome looks. My surprise is, he can fancy that

poor pale-faced thing; for she certainly is anything but pretty, and so sickly-looking. Now, his beautiful cousin, Miss Forrester—I could have understood such a match as that.”

“As far as beauty goes—yes; but for goodness and intellect give me Miss Ashworth,” answered Mrs. Glanville. “If I thought she did, or would, love him, I should not care.”

A week or two passed swiftly by, and Mrs. Glanville talked of returning, but gave in to her son's urgent entreaty to remain a little longer. Honoria was all that was kind and attentive to Ethel, but by her expressed wish never alluded to the unfortunate Cyril. She talked of herself often, and of poor Julia; said how strange it was—the change which adversity had made in her husband; for though his mind was coarse—and she still continued to feel how utterly unsuited he was to her—yet he was never harsh or unkind.

“I might have spared myself much suffering, if I had behaved better myself, Ethel,” she would say; “but I left home a spoilt, proud beauty, thinking every one was to bow to my slightest wish, and foolishly deeming I should bring my husband to subjection, never thinking of the holy vow I had uttered,—never remembering that it was my place

to obey. Oh! my poor mother, she has much to answer for in the mistaken way she brought us all up. If girls would only consider before they marry, the grave responsibility which marriage entails—the happiness here and hereafter of the *souls* of their children if they become mothers! That they should be well dressed, well educated, make a good appearance in the world, is, alas! the only thing they think of;—they fancy that education will include their moral and religious instruction, and give them a rule of conduct for their lives; but, Ethel, more than this is needed: they want a mother's untiring love and prayers,—a mother's Influence and example from their babyhood; they want a memory, a tender link with the past, to be a talisman through the world's temptations. The simplest lesson of goodness taught by a mother's loving lips is never forgotten. Of this I am certain, had I had such a mother, I should not be what I now am."

"Quite right, dear Honoria. I was, as you know, but a very young child when I lost my mother, but I remember everything she ever told me; and I never kneel to pray, but in fancy I feel her soft hand on my head, and hear her kind voice assuring me that the earnest prayer of even a little child is heard in heaven. Fortunately, on coming to your

mother, I was confided to dear good nurse, who stamped finally these early impressions on my mind; and though, Heaven knows, I have not acted in strict accordance with all the principles I learnt, I have never forgotten them; and I hope they have had some good effect."

As they spoke a sudden darkness seemed to obscure the sky, and one of the lake storms, so graphically described by our glorious poet, burst forth:—

"The sky is changed—and such a change! Oh! night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong:
Yet lovely in your strength as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman. Far along
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue;
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps who call to her aloud."

The storm was fearful, but not of long duration. As soon as it was over—although it was still raining heavily—Philip hurried in to ascertain if the ladies were alone and frightened; and he told them that unhappily there had been a sad accident. A party of people—English it was thought—had gone out just before the storm; that seeing the threatening weather, they had all returned to the hotel but one: he had laughed at their folly, and proceeded, and,

it was supposed, taken refuge from the tremendous rain under a tree, for he was found beneath one, which was splintered to its root with lightning, quite dead.

“Vengeance is mine, I will repay.”

Prophetically had Ethel whispered this to Cyril.

That morning Forrester, who had been lingering about Geneva for some time, unable to discover Honoria's retreat, had heard where she was ; and laughing at the folly of those who had turned back at the threatening weather—had gone on himself, bent on not returning till he had induced Honoria to return with him. And he who had so long forgotten there was a God in heaven, was thus fearfully called before Him, with so many unrepented sins upon his head ! Honoria and Ethel little thought whose awful death they were deploring,—that two or three hundred yards from them lay dead the only being the one had ever passionately loved, the only being the other had almost hated !

CHAPTER XXI.

"What a strange power there is in silence! When some of those cutting, sharp, blighting words have been spoken which send the hot, indignant blood to the face and head, and those who are addressed keep silence; look on with awe, for a mighty work is going on within them, and the spirit of evil, or their guardian angel, is very near to them in that hour."—*Granley Manor*.

LADY DALGETTY had returned from her wedding trip, and was staying at her mother's for a few days, preparatory to her departure to her new home in the Highlands; the Stanleys, with their boy, being there also. They thus formed quite a merry party.

Maude had had a letter of congratulation from Ethel—to whom she had sent her sister's wedding cards—wherein she had apologised for the congratulations coming so long after the event; but she had been ill, and was now writing from Mrs. Heathfield's Swiss home, where she had gone for change of air, escorted by Maude's aunt and cousin, who had given her a very graphic account of the wedding-dresses and all. She tried to write cheerfully, but Maude, who was really very fond of her, saw beneath it all a tone of sadness which pained her very much, more particularly as she had no idea of the cause.

They were to have a dinner-party the evening before Lizzy's departure, and Maude's admiration—the officer before alluded to, Captain Gordon, who had called several times since that first evening—was to be of the number ; so she had been looking forward to the day with great delight, expressing it in her wild, childish manner, and tormenting her sisters incessantly to help her think of the most enchanting dress in the world, that she might entirely “ finish ” the Captain.

Mrs. Stanley laughing, but yet chiding her good-naturedly, suggested a variety of costumes, none of which seemed to suit the capricious beauty ; but at length Lizzy in her quiet way said—

“ What do you think of pink watered-silk ? ”

“ The very thing ; charming ! ” she exclaimed, clapping her hands with delight. “ If the Captain can stand that—then he's no soldier.” And running out of the room she hastened to give the necessary orders to her maid.

“ She is as wild as ever,” said Lady Dalgetty, sorting with imperturbable gravity the wools she was working with. “ I wonder if she will ever be steady.”

“ Oh, poor child, I like to see her so merry, she will have cares and anxieties some day to cloud her

brow and calm her spirits. Does this same fascinating Captain care anything for her, do you think?"

"I have not the least idea. He's very attentive to her: flirts with her as she does with him."

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Stanley, "we all call men's attentions flirting when they are not paid to ourselves. However, I shall watch this gallant soldier narrowly. If he's a good, gentlemanly fellow, I wish there may be something in it, for I should be glad to see our dear Maude married well. I always feel so anxious about her."

That poor maid! How she was worried about the pink dress! how many times it was tried on! She would have been angry with any one but Maude; but there was no resisting, no being out of humour with her. The pretty, pleasing, coaxing demand to try it on "*once more*," the wonderful present she was to have when it was done; the absurdly funny things she said all the time, defied anger, provoking as it was. And when it really was finished, and the eventful evening came at last, and, dressed in the rich silk, with no ornament but a small brilliant, fastening the narrowest piece of black velvet round her white throat, and her soft luxuriant hair tastefully arranged, Watman was well repaid for her trouble, as with an exclamation of heartfelt admi-

ration she surveyed her lovely young mistress. Even her cold sister Lizzy vouchsafed a smile, and an opinion that she ought "to be put under a glass case."

With all her anxiety to complete her conquest of the Captain—though she knew he was in the house—she did not go down to him till she had kept her promise of "showing herself to her little nephew," whose tears at not being allowed to come down she had dried with this assurance; and she ascended a narrow flight of stairs to the top of the house, where the boy's bed-room was—well repaid for her trouble by the child's delight, who said, "She was a dear, good, beautiful Auntie, and she never broke her promise to Gerard."

The evening passed off very successfully, and Maude was perfectly satisfied with the Captain's devotion; for he was more than ever marked in his attentions, and when he left, with a very meaning pressure of the hand, asked permission to call in the morning, as he wished particularly to see her. She scarcely knew what answer she made, so was she agitated by this apparent consummation of her hopes; for with all her fun and gaiety, the Captain really had made an impression on her heart; and she would have gone to bed to sleep and dream of

him, or lie awake and think of him, but for a startling communication that put to flight all bright imaginings. A letter had arrived during the day, which through some negligence of the servant had not been delivered to Mrs. Forrester. When the company had departed, therefore, and the family were assembled, laughing and talking over the events of the evening, the servant brought the letter, with an apology for the delay.

Soon was the mirth stilled by its contents, and poor Maude's tears were raining on the lovely silk dress she had been before so proud of, all forgotten now in the deep sorrow which had fallen on them. It was from Philip Glanville, breaking, as well as he was able, the tragic death which had befallen his unhappy cousin. It concluded by assuring them of the kind sympathy he and his mother were receiving from every one, and that Mr. Petersham and Mr. Heathfield were going to join him in paying the last sad tokens of respect to the unfortunate young man. Maude's grief was as great and as demonstrative as might be expected from one of so gay and unstable a nature; but in proportion to its extreme it was short: but Lizzy felt it so much, that for some days her health was so affected that her young husband was in the greatest anxiety about her, and

as soon as she could be moved, according to the physician's order, she was to depart for Scotland, as the pleasurable excitement of visiting her new and beautiful abode might accelerate her return to health. Maude, her mother wished to accompany her, as she thought the companionship of her sister might be agreeable to her; but poor Maude by no means approved of this arrangement, for their bereavement preventing of course all admittance to the house, the interesting interview with the Captain had never transpired, and Maude was unwilling to leave England without a heart in exchange for her own. She made, therefore, a thousand excuses to avoid the necessity of going with Lizzy, none of which were accepted, and poor Maude was quite crying with sorrow and vexation when, on the evening before their departure, a note was put into her hand in a writing she was unacquainted with; and her tears were soon exchanged for delight, when she found it to contain a proposal in due form from the Captain—pleading as an apology for making an offer at such a time, that he had understood from the servant, in answer to his inquiries, that she was leaving almost immediately for Scotland, and he could not bear that she should depart from England without an assurance of his devotion—etcetera, etcetera. She flew instantly to

her mother with the precious document, expecting, of course, no opposition to her acceptance of her adorer, and her surprise and dismay were extreme to receive a cold command from her mother to have no further intercourse with a person, whom neither she nor her father would ever permit her to marry.

“Do not attempt to argue the point or worry me now, Maude. I think it is most ungentlemanly and inexcusable of the Captain to proffer such a request at a moment when he knows us to be plunged in such grief, and I shall consider it most unfeeling of you to pursue the subject or worry me about it any more. I will answer the Captain’s note—you have nothing more to do with it.”

Lizzy was on the sofa in her mother’s room during this interview; and with streaming eyes Maude turned to her.

“Lizzy, sister, speak for me! do ask mamma to be merciful. Indeed, I love him, and I shall never be happy without him.”

“Pray do not excite me, Maude—I have nothing to do with it.”

“Do not give way to such unladylike expressions, Maude; love him, indeed! I wonder you are not ashamed to confess it. Both your father and myself have a horror of military men, and will never con-

sent to your marrying one. I am surprised that, after our sad loss, you can be thinking of such a thing—you are a very heartless girl. Go away to your own room and compose yourself, pray, —and don't scream and cry like a great school-girl. I am glad you are going to Scotland to-morrow,—go away, pray, out of my sight, till you know better how to behave yourself. Stay, give me that note."

"Mamma, it is written to *me*; why must I give it up?"

"Because I order you. Give it me, Maude."

She did give it her silently, and as with a sudden effort stopping her sobs and tears, she walked out of the room, but her childlike sorrow had given way to a look of calm determination.

"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:—ah! if some of the simple and exquisite precepts of that Book were written on our hearts—made our ruling principles through life, we should then thoroughly fulfil the commands on which hang all the Law and the Prophets; we should love and fear God, and love our neighbours as ourselves.

Maude made her appearance at dinner, and, except by her silence, gave no evidence of the morning's excitement. Her father came home later than usual, and apparently vexed about something, but no allu-

sion whatever was made to the Captain. The evening passed gloomily enough, and at ten o'clock they all retired to their rooms, as they were to be stirring early in the morning. At eleven the lights were out in all the rooms but Maude's, and she was still up and dressed. A low tap at her bed-room door—she answered by a whispered "Come in."

It was Watman, carrying a bonnet and shawl, and dressed in walking attire herself.

Silently, Maude took the things from her, and put them on, and pointing to a small valise, Watman took it up, and, extinguishing the light, they both prepared to grope their way down stairs.

When they had reached the hall, Maude turned to her maid, and, whispering in a tremulous voice, "You are sure he had the note?" to which Watman answered, "Quite sure—I saw the boy give it him," they proceeded to undo the door. They got it open without much noise, but it was difficult to close; and, after much trouble, it shut with a sound which to them was like a cannon. Maude stood irresolute; but Watman seized her arm, and hurried her along.

The dismay and alarm in the morning, when the young lady and her maid were sought in vain, you can well imagine. Mrs. Forrester and her husband were in great distress: Lizzy only said, in her quiet way,—

"Oh! she is quite safe; but, naughty little girl, she has run away with the Captain, I dare say."

But the servants were in tears; for they all loved her—all were under the influence of her extreme beauty and childlike fascination: and her parents could scarcely express more vehement grief, or be more anxious to recover her, than they were. Sir Dugald said he sympathised very much with Mrs. Forrester's distress, but mentally thought it served her quite right for being so cross to the poor child; and carried his wife off at the same hour he had intended, notwithstanding all Mrs. Forrester's pleadings that she might remain until some tidings were learnt of Maude; but he said she was much too ill to be subjected to further excitement, and that he must take her away.

Soon after they were gone, Mr. Forrester returned, after having been, since first they were missed, in active and fruitless search for the fugitives. Though he had little doubt that she had run away, as Lizzy said, with the Captain, he could not ascertain it; for his note of proposal had only been addressed from an hotel, and they told him there that he had left immediately, and that they did not know his private address.

"Now, you see, my dear," he said to his wife,

"Maude could have had no possible communication with him, unless she knew his own address, because, you see, he left the hotel directly, and Maude did not leave here till late at night."

"But, good gracious, Mr. Forrester! could not she have sent that infamous Watman with a note immediately after that interview with me? Of course she did. It's disgraceful, really, one thing and another—enough to turn anybody's brain."

"It is, Emma; you're quite right. You'll be pleased to hear, perhaps, that our unfortunate boy has taken advantage of my absurd indulgence, and drawn on my Bankers to such an extent that, instead of, as I hoped, there being a large balance there in my favour, he has overdrawn the account a hundred and fifty pounds. I had my fears about this yesterday: this morning it is confirmed. I understand he lent that fellow Haward some hundreds, which, of course, I shall never see again. And so, instead of raising the town in pursuit of your runaway daughter, I must spend the rest of the day in making arrangements for the future, and curtailing our expenditure. In short, I think Miss Maude has chosen a very favourable time for sparing me the expense of keeping her and her maid, and the necessity of giving her a wedding portion."

Mrs. Forrester had listened in utter astonishment to this information, and would scarcely have believed, from his quiet tone, he was in earnest, but that she knew, when most vexed and anxious, he always spoke so. There was no consolation to be offered, she knew; so she only assured him she would do all in her power to economise, but it was very hard on them. However, "the poor dear fellow was gone now; they must make the best of it."

"But what, then, is to be done about Maude?" she asked.

"I really can't say; I have done all I can: you had better be patient, and in the course of the day, doubtless your hopeful son and daughter will come for your blessing; but do not let them or any one disturb me," and he walked away into his study; and in separate rooms, for hours those parents sat lamenting and mourning, each in their own way, over their own sorrow, and the bad behaviour of their children; never considering how completely they had brought these misfortunes on themselves.

A long course of indulgence during those years when the impressions which last a lifetime are made, the years of childhood—never tempered by wholesome advice, but occasionally exchanged for severe and unjust punishment; such had been the system on

which their children had been brought up, such was the seed they had sown. Why did they wonder that the tares had grown up and choked the wheat? none of that fear of their parents which is essential to systematic perseverance in well-doing, had been instilled in their young minds; none of that love which would make obedience to their parents' law a delight. Thus one had grown to man's estate, selfish, self-willed, and exacting, squandering the money over which he had been given such unlimited control, without one thought of how it might inconvenience his father or be detrimental to his sisters, without one thought but his own gratification; and she who had been more spoiled, more petted, perhaps, than any, had fled from home at the first, and almost only contradiction she had ever received.

Evening brought not, as Mr. Forrester predicted; a son and daughter to ask a blessing, but a letter from Maude to say she was married, and that by the time they received her letter she would be on her way to Tunbridge, where they meant to stay some weeks. She was sorry, she went on to say, that her mother's harshness had driven her to such a step as a clandestine marriage; but the marriage itself, she should never repent, she was sure.

Mrs. Forrester gave her husband the letter, asking

A A

what she was to do ; he read it through, said he cared nothing about it, the young lady had acted for herself, and as far as he was concerned, she might continue to do so ; he had done with her, and should certainly take no further trouble about her.

“ But, John, suppose—”

“ I can’t suppose anything—never let me hear her name mentioned ; I want to know nothing more of her—she is no longer a child of mine : you are at liberty to do as you like, but she doesn’t come here, mind.”

“ She is a very naughty, ungrateful girl,” sobbed her mother.

“ And you may satisfy yourself that she is well punished, and is by this time as sorry as you are. You had better write and tell Lizzy she is alive, to satisfy her anxiety, if she ever had any ; and write and tell Emma, she has run away and married a scamping soldier, for I suppose she knows nothing of it.”

“ A very naughty girl,” still sobbed Mrs. Forrester, as though she had scarcely heard her husband speak. “ But John, she was—she was—our youngest—our pet—John—hadn’t we better forgive her this once?”

“ On the child’s plea that she’ll never do it again, I suppose. No, Mrs. Forrester ; weak indulgence of one child has nearly effected our ruin ; I will not continue the principle. Maude has done wrong, let

her take the consequence;" and he left the poor mother alone without further word or consolation.

But she could not be content, thus to cast off the child of her bosom—knowing and feeling as she did now, how possibly all this might have been prevented by less harshness and severity on her part; and so she wrote a warm, affectionate letter to her, telling her how very angry her father was, but assuring her she would do her best to soften him, and that she must be sure to let her know when they were coming to town, and she would immediately pay them a visit; and despatched this with two letters to her other girls.

CHAPTER XXII.

"I do not love thee—yet, I know not why,
Whate'er thou dost seems still well done to me;
And often in my solitude I sigh,
That those I do love are not more like thee."

Mrs. Norton.

SHORTLY after Philip Glanville had told Ethel and Honoria of the sad accident which had occurred in the storm, Mr. Heathfield entered the room hastily, as though charged with some information; but seeing Philip there, he paused suddenly, and then asked his wife to come in another room with him,—

he had something to say to her. She followed him, smilingly, little dreaming the information he was about to accord her.

And Philip was alone with Ethel for the first time since he had felt how entirely she was necessary to his happiness, how sincerely he loved her. For some days previous, this fact had become evident to her. She had tried to think herself mistaken, endeavoured to persuade herself that one who had once loved Maude Forrester,—the gay, brilliant Maude,—could not love her. And then, again, she remembered how unfitted she had always thought her for him,—and Maude's last residence under his mother's roof might have convinced him of this. What was she to do? She scarcely knew how to act; but with that weary load at her heart, which she could not shake off, her energy and spirit seemed to have forsaken her; and she would rather continue to persuade herself she was mistaken, than exert herself to think what course she must pursue. There had been moments, too, since she had seen so much of him, when it had struck her, that what he *was* she had *thought* Cyril to be, and wished, with a heavy sigh, that so it had proved,—moments when she had thought, that with such a companion, such a protector, life would be a cloudless summer-day; and then she had wondered

at herself, that such thoughts should come across her, with the recollection of that one unhappy, erring being, still so fresh in her memory,—that he clung to her, that he loved her, with all his faults he loved her; and that if he should ever make reparation for the past, her fate must be united with his dark one: why did she dream of a brighter?

And now for the first time alone with Philip, these fancies had flitted like shadows through her mind: she seemed to feel an awkwardness she could not account for. He, knowing, from what he had been witness to, that there had been an attachment subsisting between her and Cyril Haward; and only imagining—from her illness and grief, his absence, and the total silence that was maintained about him—that there was some obstacle; would not venture to declare his passion for her, although he could not tear himself from the delight of being in her society; and he now felt that he would have given worlds for her to speak,—say anything, any common-place, rather than be silent,—for he himself felt tongue-tied.

At length, she, seeing the necessity to break this awkward silence, and fearing, if she did not, he would, perhaps in a manner painful to them both, expressed a hope that his mother had not been alarmed at the storm; but the necessity of replying to this was

prevented by Heathfield suddenly opening the door; and begging Ethel to come to his wife, who was ill.

Suddenly told by her husband, who wished her to break the news to Philip, that the Englishman who had met with such an awful fate, was no other than that man she had loved so devotedly, all effort at self-control was ineffectual, and she fainted. Possessed of no sensitive feelings himself, Heathfield fortunately could not imagine what had caused her illness; but repeating the circumstance to Ethel, she, with woman's quickness, saw it all, and felt at once convinced that Forrester was the person Honoria had confessed to have given her heart to. Persuading, then, Mr. Heathfield to leave the room—fearful that on recovering consciousness his wife might betray herself—she applied restoratives, without calling further assistance, and in a few seconds Honoria opened her eyes; but, to Ethel's surprise, she made no allusion to the cause of her fainting, merely saying she had not felt well all the morning, and she would go and lie down. Ethel helped her to her room, therefore, and, at her desire, left her alone. On her return to the sitting-room she found Mr. Heathfield there, but Philip was gone.

"How is Mrs. Heathfield now, Miss Ashworth?" he asked.

"Much better; but we think it prudent she should be quiet a little, and she is gone to lie down."

"She will appear at dinner?"

"Oh dear, yes,—I hope so."

"Horrid thing, this, about young Forrester, isn't it?"

"Very horrid," she answered, and genuinely she said it; for she felt truly how horrid it was that one whose life had been one long course of evil-doing, should suddenly be called before his Judge in so awful a manner. It had shocked and upset her very much; for it recalled all that had passed, and the memory of the victim so vividly, who now in exile and sorrow was expiating the sins which he had committed through Forrester, at his instigation, through his encouragement.

"I have broken it myself to Glanville," continued Mr. Heathfield; "he bore it very well—in his usual manly way. He said it would be folly to affect sorrow for a man he had neither loved nor respected; but, at the same time, the event was in itself shocking, and he feared it would upset his poor mother—how fond he is of his mother! He's a good fellow. She has made him so, Miss Ashworth; he ought to love her. I should have been a better man

if I had had a good mother ; but I was an only child : and I assure you, I'd rather know, as I do, our little one was in the grave, than have him live an only child, to be made the fool I was, and grow up to be what I am. There was but one thing my mother loved more than me—that was money ; and she taught me to love it—to live for it too ; not to serve others with it, but to serve myself. Poor old woman ! she has long ago gone to her long rest, and I suppose I ought not to say anything against her. But I can just tell you, Miss Ashworth, that loading me as she did with love and affection, indulging me, and gratifying every whim and wish, I despised her more than any one I ever knew. And what can you expect a boy to become who has such a feeling as that for his mother ?”

“ I should have little hope of him certainly, Mr. Heathfield. It is very curious, Honoria and I were having the same conversation about mothers, only a day or two ago ; poor girl, she was saying how much better she would have been had she been differently educated.”

“ Ah ! poor Honoria ; so she would. We've both had a great deal to forgive one another ; and I think we have forgiven it, and I hope made reparation. She's happier, don't you think ?”

Poor Honoria! It was a difficult question to answer, but Ethel said—

“She *must* be, Mr. Heathfield; for *now* she is doing her duty.”

“Ah!” he answered.

Poor man, that was a reasoning he did not yet quite understand.

“Well, I think I shall go out and see how poor Mrs. Glanville has borne this news. You’ll take care of Honoria. I shall expect to see her at dinner.”

Ethel smiled as he left the room; for she saw the old leaven still—the print of selfishness too indelibly made, ever to be erased.

No matter, that she might be ill, faint, and sick, that the smell of the rich dinner might be unpleasant, when he enjoyed *his* better when she was there; and she must sit there, even if she did not, could not eat, herself.

Knowing this full well, Honoria did exert herself to come down, and got through the dinner tolerably well; though Ethel perceived the painful change in her face, when Mr. Heathfield mentioned that he was asked to follow the remains of the unhappy Forrester to the grave.

That evening, the first time they had been there, Philip did not come in, and Ethel felt a strange dis-

appointment, for which she could scarcely account ; but he always made the evening so pleasant. He was so delightfully cheerful ; he put such an agreeable face on everything, had a thousand modes of making the time pass swiftly, and that most charming art of making every one pleased with themselves. Alas ! poor girl, your trials are not half over. Daily, hourly, a shadow darkens across your path, as daily, hourly, you become convinced that he whom you once loved has forfeited that love with your respect ; and that your yearning, aching heart would fain, like a bird with wearied wing, nestle itself in another and a fitter home.

The Grahams had promised to let Ethel know the moment tidings reached them of Cyril ; for Percy had requested him to write on arrival at Calcutta ; and had also requested the friends to whom he had sent him, to send him information as to his conduct, and, indeed, all particulars. Ethel was, therefore, expecting, in a few weeks, to hear some news of him ; she had received several letters from Blanche, all kindly saying how much they missed her, and anxious to hear of her return ; but Honoria said she could not spare her, and so the time had passed on.

The evening after the funeral of Gerard Forrester,

Philip was paying his accustomed visit at Mrs. Heathfield's. Honoria had felt ill all day, and was gone to her room, and Mr. Heathfield was sleeping—as he usually did after dinner. The light was too feeble for any employment, and by the window looking out on the blue waters of the lake, sat Ethel and Philip Glanville.

They had been silent some time; at length he said,

“Do you know we are going to-morrow?”

“Honoria told me so,” she answered softly.

There was another pause, and then he said—

“We have grown quite friends, have we not? and now we shall part, and perhaps never meet again: but you won't quite forget these evenings, will you?”

She did not answer, and even in that fading light he could see tears gathering in her eyes, and slowly falling down her cheek. “Ethel,” he murmured, and took her small, unresisting hand in his. She let it remain for a second, and then drawing it away, she started quickly from her chair, and saying in a hurried whisper—

“Forget—forget; I hope I shall,” she quickly left the room.

When she came down again, he was gone, and the next morning he and his mother left for England.

The following day brought a letter from Blanche. Percy had had a letter from India—containing anything but satisfactory information. His friends had been making very strict inquiries into the character of the young man he had recommended, and as they had been most unfavourable, they were rather unwilling to give him employment; but, as Mr. Graham's friend, they promised to do all they could; and that if he would be content to be at first in a very subordinate situation, they might be able to raise him, if he behaved well. They would write again as soon as he arrived. Blanche wrote very kindly to her hoping she was recovering her health and spirits, and strongly advising her to give up all idea of anything but friendship between herself and Cyril; and concluded by hoping she would return by Christmas, which was fast approaching, for if not, Percy intended fetching her himself. This letter did not at all tend to enliven poor Ethel's drooping spirits; and Honoria thought the change home again might now be beneficial to her, and proposed in the following week she should return with the Petershams, who were then going. Honoria had no ties in England now, she said; there was only one little grave that drew her heart or thoughts there ever; and so she should remain in her pretty and romantic

solitude amongst the Swiss mountains. The end of the ensuing week, therefore, found Ethel once more beneath the Grahams' roof; and their enthusiastic welcome made her feel it really was home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"See that you pray, and live deserving exactly what the All-Wise knows to be best, and then you will bear your burden with a light heart, and sometimes look up into heaven so joyously as to forget that the earth must be dug into even to make a grave. It is not real good intent, but hypocrisy, that paves the pit of darkness, while sincere, love-born purpose lays the golden pavement of the city of God."—*Man and his Motives.*

FIVE long years have rolled away. Seed-time and harvest, snow and sunshine—the seasons have gone on fulfilling each its allotted task, and man has sown, and reaped, and gathered into barns—and sorrow and happiness, good and evil, have spun their mingled yarn, and weaved it with mortals' destiny: and to some it has seemed as a little day; to others, a century: to some it has passed with monotonous regularity, unmarked by change or event, one day certifying another; but to many it has brought changes they never dreamt of—changes

of views, and thoughts, and inclinations—of hopes and fears. And where are those, into the sacredness of whose homes and thoughts I have admitted you? where are those whose lives we have been following so closely?

Ethel, Cyril—the little loving children we first remembered them—what has Time done with them? We will track Ethel first.

Into a pretty country house with luxuriant grounds, kept in excellent order, we must first gain admittance, and then in the garden, in which several people are laughing and talking, and some lying on the lawn, some gathering fruits, but all looking very happy, we will stand and find from amongst them our old friends. Why, old Time has so bandaged our eyes it is as good as a game at blind-man's-buff!—Stay! a very happy looking old lady in widow's weeds, with a much younger interesting-looking person standing beside her, talking to her so affectionately. Now who are those? There, near them, with an infant in her arms, a very pretty woman stands talking to a tall handsome man, who is gazing with a look of indefinable affection at the lady who is conversing with the widow. At a little further distance, beneath an old cherry-tree bending with the weight of its fruit, is a tall, rather awkward-looking

man, holding up the fattest, healthiest specimen of a boy, to pull down with his own chubby hands the ripe, tempting fruit, and throw it into a basket, held by a very elegant little girl about fourteen years of age. Who are they all? There are only two strangers amongst them, the infant and the little boy; but the humblest physiognomist might guess who owns them—might see by the look of mingled pride and affection that Leonard Graham and his darling Blanche are the happy parents, as he carries the boy to her to offer her some cherries, which the innocent child is most anxious baby should have too. Adele, who feels herself quite a young woman now, carries her basket of cherries to young Mrs. Glanville—to her old friend and favourite, Ethel, who is standing by her mother-in-law's chair. Yes, truly, that is the party. As we stand in that garden we are guests of the young married couple, of the now deservedly happy Ethel—guests, as the Grahams and their children are, who will ever find a hearty welcome in her home, who owes them so much.

And Cyril—aye, and Cyril. For three long tedious years Ethel had hoped against hope that her prayers for him were not all in vain, and that she might hear something which could restore him the

respect he had lost, and make him worthy to be loved again; for with her return to England came back the old softened feeling, the pitying tenderness which she had so long learnt to regard him with; the early memories and associations; her first youthful recollection of him; her first youthful affection for him. And with trembling eagerness she awaited each mail, only each time to be disappointed by less cheering accounts. Cyril himself had written but once—months after his departure—to her, reproaching her bitterly with what he called her desertion, but telling her he loved her still, madly, devotedly, and ever should. And yet—she asked him to renounce the vices he had acquired, and render himself worthy of her, and this he could not do! How strong, how sincere, must his love have been! She wrote him many letters, trying to prove this to him—trying to show him how little he could really love her, or the struggle against temptation would be easy and delightful. To these she had no reply. And at length Percy Graham heard from his friends, saying, Haward had entirely exhausted their patience, and that they had discharged him. Feeling now he was utterly hopeless, Ethel begged his name might be no more mentioned amongst them; and they strictly fulfilled her wish. Some

few months after this, Percy summoned courage to propose to Ethel, but met with a calm, kind, and decided refusal. Blanche was bitterly disappointed, and rather vexed with her, but she endeavoured to conceal it, for she knew poor Ethel had suffered so much that she would not add to her troubles; she was deeply indebted to her also for her devotion to and care of Adele. Again a mother, Blanche had little time herself to attend to this her first darling; but Ethel was untiring in her efforts to make her all that the fondest mother could wish, and she was now bidding fair to grow up a good, sensible, accomplished, and useful woman.

At length chance threw Ethel once again into the society of Philip Glanville, and, strangely enough, beneath the roof of his early admiration, his cousin Maude. In her wedded life, she had not forgotten Ethel, and having a hundred complaints to make of the "divinely handsome man," for whom she had braved parental authority, she was glad of a sympathetic ear to pour them into, and often profited by Ethel's wise advice.

Here, then, as I have said, she again met Philip, and there listened to and accepted his offer of a heart which had been so long hers. She only told him that she doubted his really being able to love

one so different as she was to those whom he had lived amongst; and feared that when she came in contact with the lovely and the brilliant, she should lose by the contrast, and he be pained. But he assured her that he had had the world before him, and time and opportunity to make his choice; that it was precisely because he had had such opportunities, that he was enabled to set its right value on the priceless treasure he found in her; that from the first moment he had seen her he felt she was capable of that affection he had so long desired to find. He saw that she was capable of being an adviser in hours of difficulty, a sympathiser in sorrow, an amusing companion in the hours of recreation. In her calm face he read intelligence far beyond the ordinary level, and a quiet serenity which would act as a counterpoise to his oftentimes too great impetuosity; and in her womanly, graceful figure, a type of that disposition he so much admired, that timid, trusting nature, which relies on and clings to the man to whom she confides her happiness for life.

"Yes, dearest Ethel," he continued, "once let me call you 'wife,' and I shall be the possessor of happiness, the nearest which this world can produce to the joys of the next. I have many faults, I own, but I think my heart is honest and true, and by contrast

with the proudest beauty this earth can hold, my gentle Ethel will only benefit, rise higher in my esteem and my affection, and teach me daily to be more thankful to the Almighty Disposer of all human events, for granting me so inestimable a treasure."

What could she say?—only give him a grateful loving smile, and register a vow to make him happy as far as she could, and offer an earnest silent aspiration that Heaven would "make her for ever amiable in his eyes, and very dear to him."

Can you doubt that the prayer was heard and answered? that one who had with such gentle patience as borne so much sorrow, with such true faith, acted well as said—"Thy will be done?" Can you doubt she had her reward, even though many and many times the memory of the past came over her like a dark shadow? She was for ever "amiable in her husband's eyes, and very dear to him," and it added tenfold to the good son's happiness to find the joy with which his now widowed, aged mother welcomed his young wife home: and Blanche and Leonard, and Mary, aye, and even Percy, rejoiced as cordially in her well-deserved happiness, as though she had been their own dear sister. In the long winter evenings, how often was she the subject of their conversation;

how often did Blanche rejoice that she was Philip's wife and not Cyril's; and then good kind Leonard would say with a sigh—"Ah! poor boy, how I wish he had not gone wrong!" It was like his faithful, good heart—he could not forget the little school-boy he had loved.

It is not well, perhaps, to leave you after all, without the last thought being a pleasant one: better to take my farewell of you in Ethel's pleasant garden, amongst the happy faces there: but I must show you one scene, ere I close my story, that you may pause to think—ere you throw the book aside as a tale which has perhaps amused an idle hour only;—that you, mothers, may pray for a strength beyond your own, to enable you to bring your children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord;"—and that we each and all may remember the heavy responsibility we bear, the power we all have of Influencing each other for good or ill, and the judgment which awaits those amongst us who cause our brothers "to offend."

In a wretched miserable lodging in London, with haggard, sallow cheeks, and hollow eyes, stretched on a bed, lies a man whose age may be some thirty years, though dissipation and reckless living have told on him more than years,—wrinkled his brow, and streaked his hair with grey. He is ill,—dying, he hopes, for he has nothing left to live for. Seated by his bedside is a man, who since his illness has nursed him with the patience and devotion of a woman, and who is now holding his fevered hand, and talking to him in soft, encouraging accents. Oh! how the poor tutor with the strange melancholy eyes is valued now!

“So many old recollections,” spoke the invalid, “run in my mind to-day. I am always saying, over and over again, a little simple sentence she once said to me, because I feel that that moment was the beginning of all my wrong-doing:—‘Cyril, you have broken your promise; I am so sorry.’ You have not broken yours, Graham: you said, long ago, that you would be my friend, if I ever needed one; and you have—you have.”

“Hush! don’t talk so much,” said Leonard, turning away his head.

“I must talk while I have strength. I want to

know so many things. You promised to tell me how you found me out?"

"Percy heard of you from the woman of the house. She is a protégée of his. He is trying to be of service to her. You know he is very good to the poor."

"He would not come to me himself, but you came, bless you! And thank you, Graham; may it soothe your dying hour. I wish, how I wish that many a young man could see me now,—all who give way to their bad inclinations, all who listen to bad advice, and make friends and companions of men of bad principle. It is frightful, the rapidity with which we fall, when, as you once told me, the purity of the young heart is sullied:—when we grow familiar with vice, and learn to look on it without shuddering, the downward course is certain. And now, tell me once again, is she happy, Graham; are you sure she is?"

"I think I may say I am sure she is; but it was long, long before she was."

"I am glad and thankful to know it before I die, Graham. I am not jealous. That sort of love has long passed away. She has long been shrined in my memory as a saint—one far too good for me; but I

know that she has prayed for me, and perhaps it is to her prayers I am indebted for the light which has dawned on my darkened soul at this eleventh hour, and made me sensible of my own sinfulness. I was cruelly unjust to her once; thought her wicked to have abandoned me, and revenged myself by neglecting to answer her sweet letters, and pursuing a still more reckless, abandoned life. But it is all over now. If I were ever to get well, I should lead a very different one; but I never shall; I have destroyed myself, I know, as much as though I had put a bullet through my head; and I am as much a self-murderer as those who have. There is one thing I should like, but I have already given you too much trouble."

"Do not say so, Cyril. Anything I can do for you is a pleasure, indeed it is; only tell me."

"Well, then, I should like to die in the country—in the pure air—and be buried in a country grave. I cannot bear these noisome churchyards."

"You shall, you shall, if you think you can bear the journey."

"I could, because I wish it so."

"Well, then, satisfy your mind on that point, I will arrange it. Try and sleep now."

* * * * *

A humble, unostentatious funeral is passing through the little village of Haverley. It enters the churchyard gates. A grave is dug next to "dear old nurse's," and there is laid "Her Cyril."

"There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

THE END.

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